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Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft management plan for the Nez Perce Clearwater National Forest. To begin, I would like to see the entire Great Burn area protected as wilderness. Looking at the management objectives for this National Forest, which includes watershed and wildlife habitat protection, road less areas such as this are increasingly rare and provide significant opportunity to protect this area permanently from motorized access impacts such as invasive species and human caused wildfire. Additionally, with species such as gray wolves and grizzlies bears in significant long-term decline across the continental United States, this area present a significant natural corridor to provide for expanding animal populations in neighboring federal landscapes. The Forest Service closed this area to snow machines several years ago, primarily to protect mountain goats, wolverines, lynx and other wildlife. It was also closed to protect the area's wilderness character. Why are these considerations suddenly being taking for granted or dismissed in current proposals? I am confused to learn that the Forest Service may now roll back these protections, particularly in fragile road less landscapes when Idaho has significant public land where these actions are allowed. Please keep the Great Burn off-limits to snowmobiles and continue to maintain the wilderness characteristics while Congress considers permanent protective legislation.

Additionally, I also want to see the Mallard-Larkins, East Meadow Creek, and West Meadow Creek protected as wilderness. These road less units provide a significant opportunity to preserve some of the last remaining intact natural habitat in the norther Rockies, particularly as they concern threatened and endangered species. East and West Meadow Creek harbor the most diverse assemblage of native fish in the Rocky Mountains, including imperiled species such as cutthroat trout. Fish species such as this has seen precipitous declines in their populations over the last 50 years, primarily due to habitat degradation, partially brought on misguided public land management. Decades of conservation biology and ecological science have shown that these species and many other depends on large, intact landscapes, with few disturbances such as road building, motorized recreation, and aggressive timber management. Additionally, these areas provide a valuable extension of already existing protected lands such as the Selway-Bitterroot wilderness, which provides some of the last chances for landscape scale conservation and protection of wide ranging species such as grizzly bears. These lands are likely to become more valuable in the future given the most up-to-date projections for climate change in the coming century and how this will undoubtedly shrink crucial habitat for sensitive species, while also reducing the resiliency of watersheds relied upon by farmers, urban areas, and aquatic wildlife. Furthermore, increasingly large numbers of visitors and residents are entering Idahos large backcountry areas for primitive recreation such as hiking, rafting, hunting, fishing, and more. I strongly urge you to consider wilderness designation that will protect these areas and these values for current and future generations alike.

Finally, I want to encourage the Forest Service to protect the North Fork and South Fork Clearwater Rivers as "wild and scenic". The North Fork is a tremendous cutthroat trout fishery, and one of Idaho's few B-run steelhead fisheries is found in the South Fork. Wild and scenic rivers designation would protect these free-flowing rivers from dams and water diversions. Although no new dams have been built in Idaho for several years, it is possible that proposals for more dams could come back to life given projected changes to Idaho's climate.