

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 4/16/2020 6:33:51 PM

First name: Halli

Last name: Hemingway

Organization:

Title:

Comments: April 16, 2020

Nez Perce Clearwater National Forests

Attn: Zach Peterson, Forest Planner

903 3rd Street

Kamiah, ID 83536

Dear Mr. Peterson:

I am writing to provide comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Nez Perce Clearwater Forest Plan Revision. This Plan will guide the Forest for at least 15 years and I want to let you know how important it is to develop a Plan that reflects the needs of the Forest, forest users, local communities, counties, and industries that depend on the Nez Perce Clearwater.

The Forest which covers over 4 million acres and grows the equivalent of over 600 million board feet per year, but annually has only been harvesting 46 million board feet per year over the past 30 years. Due to this lack of management dense stands of timber and ground fuels are now present which has resulted in catastrophic wildfires that have ravaged approximately 53 percent of the Forest. This is a staggering number of acres burned and quick action must be taken in the Plan to reduce the threat of fire and insects and disease. Thick stands of grand fir, cedar, Engelmann spruce and lodgepole which are very conducive to wildfire now dominate the landscape instead of more fire resistant species such as white pine, western larch and ponderosa pine. According to the National Insect and Disease Risk Assessment, 65 percent of the Nez Perce-Clearwater - excluding wilderness and roadless areas- are at risk of wildfire, insects and disease. This Plan must direct efforts to reduce fires and convert the Forests to their Historic Range of Variation in the next 20 years-not 50 or 100 years.

The economic health of the eleven counties that are in the economic analysis zone around the Nez Perce Clearwater National Forest working area are dependent on the jobs that are generated from managing the Forest. The State of Idaho statistics show that for every one million board feet of timber harvested 18 jobs are created. A survey of the general public in the secondary social analysis area indicates that 37 percent of residents believe that providing income to the timber industry is a very or extremely important purpose of their local, federal public lands. I would like to see the Forest select a harvest level of at least 200 million board feet per year which would generate about 3,600 much needed local jobs.

Sawmill capacity in Idaho and western Montana reached its low point in 2011 and since that time has been increasing due to investments in milling capacity and putting on additional shifts. This increased capacity is dependent on National Forest like the Nez Perce Clearwater selling more timber, and any increase in timber production will easily be absorbed by the industry.

As mentioned above much of the Forest now has dense stands of timber with little or no forage for deer and elk. Thus the populations of big game species have dropped off substantially over the past three decades. The new management strategy needs to include a regime of regeneration harvests over 40 acres in size to convert those stands to more fire resistant white pine, western larch, and ponderosa pine species, and to provide forage for big game species.

There are currently 35 Roadless Areas on the Forest totaling almost 1.5 million acres. I favor a management

strategy that will allow for commercially treating a good portion of those acres. Without treatment the Forest will continue on a path of large wildfires and loss of resources. Therefore, I am opposed to having large portions of these Roadless Areas put into the potential wilderness study area allocation.

Access to Idaho's National Forests are important to me and my family. I want the new Nez Perce Clearwater Forest Plan to acknowledge the importance to maintaining local communities, counties, and our rural way of life which is heavily reliant on the forest products industry.

Thank you for taking my comments on this very important planning process for the future of the Nez Perce Clearwater National Forest and for Northern Idaho.

Sincerely,

Halli Hemingway