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Comments: I have done past backpacking trips in the Nez Perce Clearwater (Meadow Creek roadless area) as well as in Great Burn. I am writing to comment on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest plan. Most important to me is that this new forest plan preserve key protected areas and does not open any additional areas to motors. So I urge the USFS to issue a final plan that

maintains existing boundaries of the Great Burn Recommended Wilderness Area and that maintains existing regulations to limit motorized or mechanized travel. Increased motorized recreation use in this area, particular snowmobiling, would cause negative effects on mountain goat and wolverine populations, and would effect the movement of wildlife through this corridor.

I also support Mallard-Larkins, East and West Meadow Creek, Meadow Creek-Upper North Fork and North Fork Spruce-White Sand areas as recommended wilderness.

Secondly I think this plan needs to anticipate the likely establishment of a grizzly bear population here and so the plan needs to build in plan components that take proactive measures to prevent human-wildlife conflicts.

With grizzly bear sightings on the rise, the Forest Service needs to take a more proactive approach to grizzly bear management, and integrate coexistence into the forest plan. An important step would be to bring in food storage orders to minimize future conflicts between bears and people and keep everyone safe.

Finally, it is important and a requirement under the 2012 planning rule that the USFS maintain and improve connectivity between the forest and neighboring lands. If highways that cross national forest lands are reconstructed or expanded, wildlife crossings and other measures should be included to keep wildlife connected over and under these busy roads. The right kind of management will also help address other connectivity issues facing the area, such as increased recreation.

Last, I strongly advocate that new plan have clear management guidance and desired future conditions for Recommended Wilderness that no non conforming uses (bikes, snowmobiles, etc) be allowed in these areas.

Peter Aengst