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First name: Kathryn

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: To the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest,

We are Ravalli County, Montana residents who are writing to comment on your proposed Forest Plan revisions. Although we live in Montana, we spend a lot of time in the nearby Idaho backcountry. We have kayaked the Lochsa, Selway, and many tributaries, hiked and backpacked many trails, fished many of the rivers and streams, and ridden bicycles on the roads and trails. We have accessed the backcountry from roads and have flown into back country airstrips. We have picked huckleberries and mushrooms in the forest and have enjoyed seeing the abundant wildlife, including wolves, bears, and rattlesnakes. For many years, Joe owned Osprey Aviation, and flew for the USFS, IDFG, outfitters, and private hunters, fishermen, and backpackers. From these experiences, we have developed a deep love for the Idaho backcountry and we care that it remain as pristine as possible.

When we looked at your proposed Forest Plan revisions, we were struck by several observations. First, although several spectacular areas have been proposed to be recommended wilderness in the various plans, no alternative includes all of the possible wilderness. If parts of the NP-CNF are suitable for wilderness designation, they should be recommended for protection, as very little of our country remains untrammeled.

Second, a number of rivers and streams are designated as possible or suitable for Wild and Scenic designation, yet no alternative includes all of them as recommended, or at least protected for future possible recommendation.

We also feel very strongly that mountain bikes should be excluded from all designated and recommended wilderness. While we enjoy mountain biking and ride regularly, bicycles are mechanized and, therefore, excluded by the Wilderness Act from use in designated Wilderness Areas. Although relatively few people ride trails around here and in the Idaho backcountry, those impacts will grow as the population grows.

Finally, we think that the impacts of climate change should be considered when predicting regeneration after wildfire or logging. Natural regeneration in a warmer and potentially drier climate would likely be slower. It also seems likely that forest types will shift over time in a warming world, and that regeneration after wildfire or logging will lead to a completely different ecosystem. Although we applaud you for considering carbon storage as an ecosystem service provided by the forests, large trees store more carbon than regenerating forests, so old growth and large trees should be left standing, except as necessary for forest health or wildfire danger mitigation.

In summary, we think that the plan should include all possible recommended wilderness, all suitable wild and scenic river designations, exclude bicycles from any potential wilderness or wilderness study areas, and include climate change as a consideration for both carbon storage and regeneration. Idaho has the gift of many acres of pristine wild lands. Preserving that land for future generations is the best use for those lands.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Tilly and Joe Rimensberger