

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 4/20/2020 8:57:55 PM

First name: Wes

Last name: Swaffar

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I have recently reviewed the released Nez Perce-Clearwater Forest Plan Revision Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Draft Revised Forest Plan. None of the alternatives presented reflect the management I would like to see implemented for the Hoodoo Roadless Area. Please accept these comments into the formal record.

First off, my thanks go out to the Nez Perce Clearwater National Forest Supervisor and planning team to field public comment from diverse constituents all of which feel passionately. My name is Wes Swaffar, and while I am board president of the Great Burn Conservation Alliance (GBCA), I am submitting this comment on behalf of myself as a citizen. GBCA is sending in a very thoughtful public comment in coordination with The Wilderness Society and Idaho Conservation League. I understand the difficult and messy decision of fielding public input. Thank you for your service.

I will be honest in stating that I am disappointed to see that the alternatives put forward do not maximize the designation of lands formerly managed as Recommended Wilderness, especially the reductions in and around the Great Burn (Hoodoo) Roadless area.

I will not attempt to address the broader environmental concerns that I share with GBCA, TWS, and ICL. Those are well documented in the organizational public comments. That said, releasing these acres from management as wilderness for these areas seems misguided. Lets take one critter, for example, the wolverine. A generous population assessments puts them at a total number of 250 in the continental US. The Nez/Clear provides some of critical habitat. Increasing motorized and mechanized in and around highcountry areas like the Great Burn does not feel like an idea that is resonant to the situation at hand. And knowing that were facing an increasingly uncertain environmental conditions (climate change) Wolverine are just one of many species of concern. There are populations of mountain goats that are in decline in the southern Great Burn and we know grizzly bears find this suitable habitat.

I am also confused at what kind of signals this sends to constituents of our National Forests. Snowmobiles repeatedly violated the boundaries of recommended wilderness like the Great Burn, and in turn it appears they will be granted with more access. The mountain bike community used loosely defined language and a lack of LEO presence to establish use in the Great Burn. Meanwhile, conservation and stewardship organizations like GBCA have been decades long stewards and partners, but are not recognized as such. I do not think that the alternatives put forward are reflective of the contributions that partners have put forward.

The most operative question is this: If its determined that the Nez Perce Clearwater National Forest will reduce recommended wilderness, how does it plan to mitigate damage to other resource values? How does it intend to manage conflict on the Idaho state line? It would be easier for me personally to understand. Is the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest ready to manage these recreational disputes? If not, I fear that this Forest plan could be litigated and could become the subject of further controversy.

For decades, there has been a dedicated group of folks working hard to partner with the Nez Perce Clearwater National Forest, and countless more than have enjoyed this wild country. Having the Great Burn and adjoining roadless areas managed as Recommended Wilderness makes sense. Sustaining this management legacy reduces management expenses and will allow for consistent transboundary management when the Lolo Forest plan is up.

Below is a summary of my remarks. I trust that the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest leadership and planning team will consider my remarks, and the objective information that groups like GBCA have provide.

Thank you for listening.

Wes

In summary:

The decision to put forward only alternatives that would result in reduced Recommended Wilderness seems misguided and sends conflicting signals to constituents around influence.

Please understand the management tradeoffs at hand with access vs. habitat viability for sensitive wildlife.

Permitting mechanized and motorized access into wild areas like the Great Burn will result in wildlife conflict and reduction in wilderness values

Alternatives as written beg questions of sustainable management, management capacity of the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest to manage that recreation and will likely lead to conflict.

Spent my first year as a forest service seasonal in the Great Burn in 2008, and go back there every year. This place should be managed as the wild country that it is.

I would like to see the ENTIRE Hoodoo Roadless area protected as Recommended wilderness. I do believe other roadless areas should be protected as well.

Because it's been an inconsistent application of law enforcement and recreation management in the past. Mountain Bike use and oversnow vehicle travel are already the result of broken rules and lack of enforcement.

Cayuse Creek and Kelly Creek should be wild and scenic

None other than what's been included already

Thank you for fielding public comment.