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First name: Peter

Last name: Metcalf

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Nez Perce-Clearwater Forest Plan Revision Team,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on the draft revised forest plan for the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest. I've had the privilege to work and recreate on the forest for many years, principally as a river guide for 10 years on the Lochsa and Selway rivers. I've also led student groups into the Great Burn Recommended Wilderness area when I was a graduate student at the University of Montana. Additionally, many wonderful and memorable personal moments have been spent paddling the streams and hiking the trails of the forest. These experiences have left no doubt that the NPCNF is a marvelous landscape full of incredible wild country, rich in fish and wildlife resources, and a source of vital clean water for downstream communities. This land needs to be carefully managed to ensure these qualities are maintained, or improved where presently diminished.

I'd like to highlight one area in particular in my comments - The Great Burn Recommended Wilderness Area that straddles the Montana-Idaho Border. For over 40 years this 275,000 acre wildland has been recommended for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System (just over 151,000 acres are on the NPCNF). The revised plan should continue to recommend the entirety of eligible lands within the area called the Great Burn for designation as Wilderness. This area is one of the largest remaining unprotected roadless areas left in the entire coterminous United States. It is an area of profound importance to many wildlife species, including sensitive species like grizzly bears, lynx, wolverines, fisher, cutthroat trout, bull trout, and mountain goats. Furthermore, the Wilderness Character of this landscape is just exceptional by all measures: wildness, naturalness, undeveloped, and outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation or solitude.

The revised forest plan should prioritize maintaining the Wilderness Character of this landscape. In particular, none of the area should be open to motorized use in either summer or winter. Nor should it be open to mechanized use, such as by mountain bikes. Both forms of transportation degrade Wilderness character, thereby limiting the likelihood the area will be designated as Wilderness. From a pragmatic recreation management perspective, they also create conflicts with other wildland recreationists that can be avoided by separating these uses on the landscape. The level of impacts on wildlife, particularly by motorized recreation, is also underscores the conservation imperative to protect wildlife habitat by prohibiting motorized recreation in recommended wilderness areas. Snowmobiles, which the draft plan considers expanding, should be prohibited within the entirety of the Great Burn. While snowmobiles currently access parts of the Great Burn, they mostly do so in violation of federal policies that require managers to manage Recommended Wilderness to maintain Wilderness Character. Trespass into recommended wilderness should not be rewarded by subsequently authorizing such activity. In addition, snowmobiles create impacts to mountain goats and to grizzly bears that the Forest Service needs to give greater weight in its decision making. To be clear, snowmobiles belong on the forest just not in the Great Burn.

Finally, I'd like to encourage the Forest Service to recognize Kelly Fork and all its forks, as well as Cayuse Creek as suitable for Wild and Scenic River status. These streams have outstandingly remarkable value for their water quality, for fish habitat, for their scenic aesthetics, and in some sections, for recreational paddling.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed revisions to the NPCNF plan.