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Comments: I have recently reviewed a summary of the Nez Perce-Clearwater 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.

I'm a retired lawyer, a resident of Western Montana for more than 45 years, and someone whose entire reason for living and raising a family here in the Northern Rockies is directly related to the extensive system of wild public lands we're blessed with in the region. For most of my adult life, I, my wife and daughters have gained immeasurably -- both physically and mentally -- from our proximity to wildlands in both Montana and northeastern Idaho, including the Great Burn / Hoodoo recommended wilderness area. Many of my fondest memories center around hiking, camping, fishing, hunting, canoeing, kayaking and just simply being in the pristine backcountry of the region.

I'm writing now to register my heartfelt concerns and objections over deficiencies in the current draft forest plan that's been issued by the Nez-Perce Clearwater National Forest. First and foremost, the proposal to reduce or even entirely eliminate the Great Burn / Hoodoo ["GBH"] as a recommended wilderness area would be a travesty. As recognized by almost everyone over the past many years, the GBH is eminently qualified for wilderness designation by virtue of both its spectacular geography and pristine, undeveloped nature. Given the scope of the nation and region's continued population growth, we need now -- and will need even more so in the years and decades to come -- all of the wilderness we've still managed to retain to this point in our country's history.

Second, allowing legal motorized use of the GBH (currently illegal, but nevertheless continuing), whether in the form of snowmobiles or otherwise, poses a serious risk to the area's wildlife, including most significantly its exceptional mountain goat and wolverine populations. Motorized use of a substantial percentage of the national forests is already a confirmed fact. Why expand that here and now, to such a magnificent and unparalleled wilderness venue, to the detriment of the local wildlife and those in search of quiet backcountry recreation? The suggestion -- often proffered by snowmobile or other motorized use advocates -- that a "little [mechanized] noise" here and there really doesn't make much of a difference, is an insult to both wildlife and those of us who deliberately seek out wild places for the specific reasons that they are quiet; that they do represent places where mankind is only a temporary and invisible visitor; and that they provide a respite from the unceasing noise, smell and congestion of the civilization it's so difficult to escape from everywhere else we go in this crowded world.

Third, Cayuse Creek and Kelly Creek and its forks are all eminently qualified for Wild and Scenic Rivers designation. Leaving them out now makes no sense, and as stated above makes no sense especially when the readily foreseeable press of increasing numbers of our countrymen and women in the years ahead -- all seeking the same kinds of uncrowded wilderness floats many of us have found so memorable, necessary and therapeutic -- are factored into the equation.

And fourth, and more globally, the precedent the draft plan under consideration would set in reducing the wild, unsullied nature of the GBH -- which could potentially open up the area to road-building, timber harvesting and other development in the coming years -- would be taking a critical step in exactly the wrong direction, and at exactly the wrong time as wise minds instead seek to preserve the relatively small amount of true wilderness and wild rivers we still have.

For all these reasons, and others, I ask that the draft plan be revised to preserve the GBH in its current, undeveloped and wilderness - qualified nature. Thanks very much for considering my views.