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Comments: To the planning committee of the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest and the collected regulators and lawmakers who will develop and implement the future management of this wild and wonderful land, I ask that you take my comments into consideration. I am a citizen of the Inland Northwest who spends time recreating in the public lands of North Idaho. I work in salmon conservation in Eastern Washington and will begin work on a Master's degree in American Environmental History this upcoming fall at the University of Montana. I love this land that I have called home for the past eight years and hope to explore for decades to come. This planning process should be the first step in a future that continues and improves upon the best practices of our shared history in these mountains.

My primary concern in the management of these public lands is the recovery of endangered aquatic species including both A and B run Steelhead Trout, Chinook Salmon, and Pacific Lamprey. These species have all been slipping into decline due to a variety of factors stemming from climate change, habitat loss, and hydropower management. The recovery of these fish to the abundant harvestable numbers that once existed (a recovery which the federal government is mandated to pursue by the Endangered Species Act) relies on the preservation of spawning habitat in Idaho. While the forks of the Salmon River and the Loksah have been protected from development, it is troubling to see the extremely important habitat in the South Fork of the Clearwater and in smaller tributaries such as Meadow Creek and Fish Creek remain unprotected. No management plan should be accepted which does not recommend Wild and Scenic protection for these streams. The political battle over the management of the Lower Snake River and the potential removal of the Lower Snake Dams may be outside of the Forest Service's jurisdiction, but it would be profoundly irresponsible to allow the upstream habitat that salmon need to be compromised by dams, mines, roads, and clearcuts.

In addition to the expansion of Wild and Scenic protections, it is vitally important that the PACFISH and INFISH programs be maintained and that these systems guide the creation of the final plan. Riparian areas are crucial to salmon survival as they provide shade during the hot summer months when trout and salmon are susceptible to heat-affected mortality and predation from birds of prey. Clearcuts in stream corridors, even if not directly in the riparian zone, add to sediment levels in streams, further threatening imperilled species.

In addition to preserving habitat, maintaining diverse forests and limiting the amount of timber harvest will help us combat the effects of climate change. Every bit of carbon sequestered in a fully developed forest is carbon that does not need to dissolve in the ocean and further contribute to dead zones that kill salmon before they have a chance to make the trek back to Idaho. With the temperatures we are seeing every year in the lower Columbia, every possible step toward reducing global temperatures gives salmon and steelhead a better chance at recovery.

As for the terrestrial species, I would like to see a plan implemented that prizes connectivity of habitat. For this purpose, the Great Burn Wilderness, Mallard Larkins Wilderness, and East and West Meadow Creek Wilderness areas should be considered. These areas are threatened by the encroachment of motorized recreation, especially from new snow bikes, which frighten the native goat, bear, and wolverine populations and impact their survival. Giving the local forest service the authority to address these practices makes sense in such a remote region of our country. I would gladly submit to permitting processes if it meant that these places would remain pristine sanctuaries for their original inhabitants.

I am not well versed in the technical aspects of forestry, so on this subject I will refer the reader to the comments submitted by Brett Haverstick and the Friends of the Clearwater as they are knowledgeable, dedicated stewards and residents of this region. I will note however, that when it comes to the economics of forestry, the State of

Alaska has found that salmon harvest can be as much as five times more valuable than timber harvest. If the activity of timber businesses and mineral extraction threaten the sportfishing businesses of Idaho or the commercial fishery from California to Kamchatka, we will be trading sustainable prosperity for short term profit. Forest product companies such as Sealaska have found that they can make more money leaving their forests standing than they can by cutting and selling them. It takes decades to regrow a clearcut, it takes only two to seven years to grow a generation of salmon.

Thank you for your work on developing this plan. I enjoyed meeting members of your staff at an open house in January. I am nervous about the idea of generating a compromise plan that incorporates elements of all alternatives. The service should take the most aggressive approach toward conservation, not a compromise.

Best,
Jacob Schmidt