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Forest Plan Revision

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To whom it may concern,

I am writing as a frequent forest user, to express my opinion on the new Draft Forest Management Plan that will guide the direction for your agency for another generation or more, around what will be allowed to happen in the combined 4 million acres that make up the Nez Perce and Clearwater National Forests. This version will replace the occasionally revised original version that went into effect in 1987. That original plan has had the effect of preserving the intention of Frank Church when he worked so hard to protect these remote forests for people from all over the planet to enjoy for future generations.

The wild and scenic rivers in these forests, and the species they support, would not have remained as clean as they are without the efforts of so many who appreciate these rare gems of nature that people from all over the world and this country travel to enjoy. The spiritual need for being in nature is satisfied by these wild places, where 1.1 million acres of designated wilderness are found.

These 1.1 million acres must continue to exist as a sanctuary for recreationists and the last remaining populations of the species that depend on this habitat, many of which will cease to exist without it. Within this area, another 1.5 million acres of undeveloped roadless lands and many unprotected wild rivers are also in jeopardy of losing these rare qualities with this proposed/draft plan.

I am strongly opposed to this draft plan because of the heavy logging that will be required to occur, destroying forever these wild places that are some of the world's last carbon sinks and clean water sources. This revision would have incredibly negative effects on people and wildlife for thousands of miles downstream, and for the entire world, as the carbon sequestration ability of these dense forests will follow the fate of so many other forests in Idaho's front-range. Heavy logging will make catastrophic wildfires more of the norm in Idaho, as it has become in Washington and Oregon, where the clear-cutting has dried out the soils and made firefighting ever more difficult.

The draft plan alternatives are extremely biased against protecting natural processes. One alternative recommends no new Wilderness. No alternative recommends preserving the road-less areas for Wilderness. One of the alternatives provides no protection for the recommended Wilderness areas from mechanized or motorized public use.

All roadless areas should be protected as recommended wilderness or another equally protective category,

including the areas adjacent to the Gospel-Hump Wilderness that were omitted from the Idaho Roadless Rule. No alternative proposes roadless protections for the Frank Church-River of No Return additions (Cove-Mallard) or the Lochsa Slope Selway-Bitterroot addition, which I just found out was once protected as the old Selway Primitive Area prior to 1963. No alternative recognizes most additions to the Gospel-Hump Wilderness as being roadless, even though site-specific inventories by the Forest Service yourself show these areas to date have no roads and are unlogged. Inadequate wilderness proposals exist for Mallard-Larkins, Kelly Creek and Fish Lake, and the Meadow Creek addition to the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. Weitas Creek with over ¼ million acres of wild country is only recommended in one alternative that is not likely to be selected. The same is true for Pot Mountain, Upper North Fork, and Fish and Hungry Creeks.

There will be absolutely no roadless areas proposed to remain non-mechanized, non-motorized back-country, making your agency guilty of lies to the public in addition to your failure to amend the Idaho Roadless Rule to protect other areas, which lies within your agency's ability to do.

Back to Weitas Creek, 260,000 acres of roadless wilderness, with numerous sensitive species as well as grizzlies within it. This needs to be designated Wilderness, to allow the unmaintained 555 route beyond the Guard Station Bridge to be incorporated into the Wilderness.

I often come to Idaho to enjoy fishing with my friends and family who live in McCall and Boise. I am very concerned about the Steelhead population, which is very threatened and needs protection, along with the salmon, bull trout, Westslope cutthroat and Pacific Lamprey. There should be no exceptions to allow logging that will reduce the buffers from 300 feet to 150 feet along rivers and streams.

Standards from sediment must be met using biological assessments for verification, or there should be no new road building or logging in the watershed. Water quality standards are already not being met, and with increased logging, this failure to keep water clean will continue. For this reason vacant grazing allotments need to be closed. Even more importantly, Oil and Gas leasing should not be possible in these areas where sensitive species rely on intact ecosystems for survival. Mining for metals also needs to be precluded.

To protect the best habitat, logging, road building, and other development must be kept out of roadless areas, as well as mining for metal, oil or gas. This protection is needed for the wide variety of Species of Conservation Concern (SCC), of which many noted by Region 1 are excluded from your list, which should include the Bog Lemming, western toad, ringneck snake, Black Swift, Common Loon, Black - Backed Woodpecker, Bald Eagle, and Peregrine Falcon. Please add these to your next draft of this revised Forest Plan's SCC list, as Region 1 has already done.

In summary, I urge your agency to choose the plan that has been put forth by the Friends of the Clearwater; The Citizen's Action Plan. Your agency's proposed plan has "desired future conditions" that would result in massive manipulation of the systems that occur naturally in these rocky mountain SCC habitats; Where there naturally are trees, the agency wants different trees or "openings". Where there naturally are openings, the agency wants more trees. This is scientifically suspect, and biological assessments are very clear; natural processes like wind, rain, and fire should determine future conditions and have a better record than agency manipulation in creating/preserving diverse forests. This proposed/draft plan has desired future conditions that would result in massive manipulation and release of carbon as well, which is yet another reason on top of all the rest, that this draft proposal is unacceptable.

It is unconscionable to have such non-existent and unenforceable standards for protecting water quality and fish and wildlife habitat. It is the job of your agency to ensure loop-hole free protections for wildlife and fish habitat and water quality. Grizzly protection through wildlife corridor preservation is also essential. These protections need to be enforceable and non-discretionary.

The Citizen Alternative will accomplish these things, and should entirely replace your Draft.

Please do the right thing for future generations of flora, fauna, and people.

Sincerely,

~Laurie Solomon

