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Organization: Team Lochsa

Title: President Board of Directors

Comments: RE: Official Forest Plan Revision Comments from Team Lochsa Club Membership and BOD, (see us at: teamlochsa.com. - web site and Team Lochsa-face book and Instagram)

Dear Zack Peterson-Forest Planner

Thank you for investing the time to work closely with the public to solicit feedback and hear our views. Everyone in this club is very pleased with how you and your team are not only reaching out to the counties effected but also the broader users of that forest which include the large userbase coming from the Bitterroot Valley and Highway 90 corridor in Montana. It is our observation that your biggest public user base of these lands, (definitely winter and early spring) come from the East and North East sides of this wonderful Forest. The town hall attendance probably reflected that... Thank you again.

Team Lochsa is currently a 443-m.ember club, (and growing) consisting of women, men and youth who have a passion for the Clear/Nez forest lands and tributaries that provide wonderful and unique opportunities for recreation. We are a non-profit LLC and donate considerable time, funds and human resource to help preserve, maintain and support the recreational elements of these special lands. We also provide search and rescue services in the region. We view ourselves as strong steward of the land and we strongly support all aspects of the lands from Wilderness to high access and/ or roaded.

With Regards to Access, Recreation, Economic and Social Sustainability (RESS) and Recommended Wilderness, we would like your team to record the following position as an opinion from our entire membership. Also, you have heard our detailed comments in previous written submissions and our voices at your collaborative committee meetings. So, in this submission we will just sum our conclusions:

Access:

Team Lochsa is often at the front of clearing roads and trails early in season to expediate accessibility in various sporting seasons. Much of that work is self-triggered and rarely noted, but a, "hoot" to do and we know it is valuable for the many folks who want to get into the woods for a host of reasons from starting their kayak season early in the high country, to mushroom picking, single track riding, firewood gathering, hunting, Horseback riding, hiking, snowmobiling etc. We are probably your most active and largest club in this forest and enjoying it year around.

However, in the wintertime we are not only the most active in this region but probably the most aware of what really goes on in these woods. Your recent closure of the Great Burn area, (Travel Plan, in particular the Black Lead and Williams range) hurt our club and many others very hard. That region was most popular in the winter and most used by many ages and genders, and the only area of its kind this side of Canada.

We definitely want to see that area and other areas that were closed in the, "Travel Plan" re[shy] opened for, "motorized, over snow use". We are also very willing to work with the agency to help manage this important public access. In our opinion the closure was an access loss that affected your biggest public user and has many other negative impacts we will address in other section of our comments.

Recreation, Economic and Social Sustainability (RESS):

This topic needs considerable attention from all federal/ state and local government agencies in our opinion. In

particular, as we look closely at the, "Checkerboard" private and federal owned lands in the upper Lochsa and any of the lands bordering your biggest user groups coming in from Montana, we believe RESS opportunity has been grossly missed. In addition, access closures in this forest only compounds the problem/ opportunity.

It is not an easy task, but Team Lochsa would like to see a much bigger effort put forth by the Counties, Montana and Idaho states, USFS and the neighboring cities to address the economic and recreation opportunity potential. To date, the collaborative efforts by all of the agencies to address this appears a, "back-burner" at best. However, the collaborative work you have done with this Forest Plan Revision, in our opinion, was a step in the right direction to reverse that perception and you set the stage nicely to take the dynamics of RESS to the next level, (provided your decision for access does not prohibit the opportunity).

Simply put, this is one of the world's most famous whitewater recreation and scenic rivers with road access, some of the worlds best high mountain snowmobile and extreme skiing country, world class single track and mountain bike riding, one of the motorized road bike industries most recommended Northwest destinations and scenic highway rides, top salmon, steelhead, and trout fishing streams, tremendous hiking, back packing, horseback riding, snow shoeing, hunting etc.... not to mention the USFS has some of the beset campgrounds in the Nation in this special region. WOW,... maybe it is time to capitalize on this.

We believe the USPS has a tremendous opportunity in the Forest Plan revision options to show then: awareness of RESS and to reflect changes to the existing plan that complement the evolution of sports and recreation as it pertains to technology and the largest user groups of the Clear/Nez Forest. On that note,... We would be amiss if we did not mention and complement your team for the innovative electronic information and reader boards you have implemented in a few areas. It has been very well received by those tourists we run into enjoying the historic 500 Rd. and Powell. Thank you.

We believe the USPS's Forest Plan Revision and suggested Direction/ Options provided at least one or 2 good paths for improved economic development by addressing improved public use/ access for wintertime sports. By looking at all of the seasons and all of the forest uses in those seasons we can probably increase RESS opportunities exponentially. Older versions of the Forest Plan did not have this, "new age" dynamic. Technology combined with the, "extreme athlete era" has created a zero seasonal down time for many of this forest's biggest users. Likewise, we are seeing the general public and casual athletes pushing the peg as well and enjoying the outdoors like NEVER before. Please conclude on a New Forest Plan for the Clear/Nez which adequately reflects this undeniable trend.

We know that funding to manage this is an issue, hence the reason to offer assist from our club for general management of the stewardship of these lands... Having said that, we also want to encourage and write our Congressmen to better fund RESS opportunity in this region.

Improved RESS can be done!... will get done,... but not without the USPS consciously driving that consideration in the final Forest Plan Options/Conclusions....Again, we are NOT a one-off minority interest. We are representing hundreds of ACTUAL users of these lands who want the evolution of this Forest to reflect the reality of more users and related policy shift, while never compromising the Forest's beauty and total value to ALL who respect it.

Recommended Wilderness:

We have met with the wilderness groups and respect their desire for more. We also respect wilderness in general... and we hike and enjoy it immensely. However, we believe compromise is needed to truly and effectively manage the forests for the public and the evolution of recreation. This compromise needs to be reflective in your final decision.

Many of Team Lochsa's membership are active in multiple sports and enjoy of the Clear/Nez Forests for many values. It is not uncommon for some members to be hiking in the wilderness one day, floating or kayaking the Lochsa another day, single track riding the following and getting a late spring snowmobile ride that same week.

We think a true steward of the land takes care of it regardless of the sport or use they enjoy. We also think those stewards care about and appreciate all user values and interests and want to see the lands properly allocated to accommodate the userbase.

The Forest Plan needs to reflect on the evolution of the new userbase and look at the allocation of lands and how additional wilderness might not adequately accommodate the public demand.

Once again... TL membership greatly appreciates and supports wilderness and is not opposed to some regions being added where appropriate. However, unfortunately the current Travel Plan fights the userbase trends, the recreation trends, the sport technology trends, the economic impacts, traditional and biggest growing user trends, community needs and shows little compromise. So, unless the Forest Plan makes changes which will open areas that you recently closed in your Travel Plan our Club cannot support any recommendation for more wilderness.

In sum, the Great Burn may have regions that could and should be in wilderness... However, the areas that have been traditionally open to motorized snow use are now closed to your public, (like in Black lead and Williams etc... (again, see our maps)). Re-open those areas and we will support alternatives for more Wilderness.

WE want to be part of the solution with you.

Closing:

Thank you again for sponsoring the many regional meetings and tremendous community collaboration.

Clearly, you have the keys in this decision to evolve with the public interest. Your investigation and public meetings to date encourage us that you will do exactly that... You saw the volumes of people who attended your meetings. These people want to make sure they were heard.

As we have said throughout this document, compromise is needed. We also noted and appreciated the options you presented. Thank you.

In our opinion and conclusion, you need to help the agency evolve its older policies and targets to reflect the wonderful new era of users this beautiful Forest entertains and provides for.

We believe the Great Burn may have remote areas that are possibly suited for wilderness. However, only if a consideration was made designating most of the Great Burn as a Special Management Area, allowing winter motorized use for sure, and potentially some areas designated for summertime recreational motorized and/ or mechanized use.

In addition, we want to see a stronger emphasis by YOU and all other agencies to collaboratively address RESS opportunity on the forest. We believe you have led the way in this process, and we would like to see you lead it to the next level.

If we can help in any way... please reach out to us.

Again, we thank you very much for the opportunity to give our feedback and observation.