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Organization:

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Comments: September 17, 2020

Erin Philips, District Ranger
New Meadows Ranger District
P.O. Box J
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Dear Ranger Philips,

I do not support the proposal to allow motorized/mechanized uses on trails 183, 184, 187 and 188 outside the Rapid River Wild and Scenic River corridor. All of these trails, both inside the Wild and Scenic River corridor and outside the corridor should be managed for non-motorize/non-mechanized recreation.

I believe that the Forest Service should manage the Rapid River drainage for a non-motorized, non-mechanized recreational experience. Managing the Rapid River Wild and Scenic corridor for non-motorized and non-mechanized uses is mandated by CFR regulations. The trails in the Rapid River drainage outside the corridor should be similarly managed to achieve a non-motorized, non-mechanized recreational experience in Rapid River.

Those who want a non-motorized/non-mechanized recreational experience do not have that many options on the New Meadows Ranger District. Managing the Rapid River drainage for non-motorized/non-mechanized recreation likely provides some much-needed recreational diversity in this area. I suspect motorized/mechanized recreationists have an abundance of opportunities on the New Meadows Ranger District, and the trails under consideration to open to these uses in Rapid River are not needed to provide "more" opportunities for these recreationists.

Allowing motorized recreation in the Rapid River drainage will degrade the recreational experience of others. It is well established that the whining noise of motors carries for miles in these situations. The non-motorized recreation experience expected in the Rapid River Wild and Scenic corridor will be degraded by the whine of motors above the corridor if the proposed action proceeds.

The proposed action refers to "turnaround" construction for motorized/mechanized users where the trails under consideration for these uses end at the Wild and Scenic River corridor. With scarce trail dollars a fact of life, it is disappointing to see this degree of catering to a single constituency. Scarce dollars are better spent on general trail maintenance rather than creating "turnarounds" for a single constituency.

I believe it is naïve to think that motorized/mechanized users will respect the closures of the trails under consideration at the Wild and Scenic corridor if allowed into the Rapid River drainage. Unless the Forest Service completely obliterates the old trails that traversed Rapid River - again, more scarce dollars allocated to mitigate the effects of this proposal - it is guaranteed that a significant portion of the motorized/mechanized recreationists will blast through the trail closures into the Wild and Scenic River corridor. I'm not familiar with any success stories of where these dead-end turnarounds for motorized/mechanized users succeed if a trail, or the trace of a trail, exists beyond the closure.

Examples abound on the Idaho side of Hells Canyon, where the Forest Service has tried, and failed, to stop motorized recreationists from driving beyond closures. They simply won't do it if a trail/track exists beyond the

closure. It is much more likely that closures will succeed if they occur on the rim of the Rapid River drainage where users can continue on other trails, rather than well down into to the river canyon, to a dead end, as proposed by this action.

I also believe that conducting an environmental assessment for this project is likely a mistake. The effects of motorized/mechanized recreation on wildlife, soil, other recreationists and other issues should receive a more robust analysis than is usually provided in an environmental assessment.

In summary, I support making permanent the existing closure to motorized/mechanized uses on the trails under consideration in this proposal. The Rapid River drainage, not just the Wild and Scenic corridor, should be managed for non-motorized/non-mechanize recreation.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Alan Hausrath

(contact information on the form)