

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/22/2021 6:38:28 PM

First name: Steven

Last name: Harshfield

Organization:

Title:

Comments: My family has lived and worked in the East Fork watershed for 95 years. My Grandparents and Great Grandparents operated the Cox Dude Ranch with it's hunting and fishing business. For the last 30 years, I worked with the Boise and Challis Forests to maintain the Springfield Mine. For the last 20 years, I participated in the Boise and Payette Forest Management Plans. I attended the Payette Forest Road Collaborative meetings during the Big Creek and the East Fork discussions. I just read Conway Ivy's and Chris Schwarzhoff's comments for the East Fork Management Plan. Those two men wrote well, expressing the desires and frustrations of inholders and of the recreating public. What can I add? Here is my perspective.

Even though the East Fork was my main interest, I left the Collaborative because the East Fork discussion failed to make progress. I had spent all the time and money I could justify on the Collaborative because the discussion was going nowhere. Unlike the fruitful Big Creek discussion, the East Fork discussion had no substantial compromise. The Road Collaborative found many ways to keep beloved Big Creek roads open. However, we found no way to keep the much more used and well established East Fork roads open: namely, the Red Metal Mine road and the Cinnabar Mine (Sugar Creek) road. As near as I can tell, the reason for our failure was part procedure and part politics.

The procedure was that the Forest Service considered the roads "closed" prior to the Collaborative discussion and "opening" a road required mitigation. Never mind that the public did not agree with that assessment in court or on the roads they continued to use. Anyway, there was not enough mitigation, or rather not enough money for mitigation, to open up "closed" roads. This explains why the Big Creek discussion went nowhere for 6 to 12 months. After this fruitless time, politics came into play. The Nez Perce Nation started bending toward access and it was a watershed moment. We began to compromise. That watershed moment never happened during the East Fork discussion. What was different? The only difference I see is overwhelming mining and money. Not that these things are bad, but they seem to have sucked the life out of our ability to compromise.

We are obviously stuck. Hence, I suggest the East Fork Management Plan finds ways to at least acknowledge historic public access rights. How? In the near term, the Management Plan must clearly spell out the public access to Thunder Mountain. Representatives from the Forest Service and from the Stibnite mine have been saying that the public can have access to Thunder Mountain on one of the Stibnite mining roads. Not so fast. During one of my last interactions with the Stibnite mining company, they would not commit to giving the public consistent access to Thunder Mountain. Not codifying public access to Thunder Mountain in the Management Plan is unacceptable. The public must not be jerked around like this. Next, long term public access options must be protected by keeping old access routes available, like the Red Metal Mine road and the Cinnabar Mine (Sugar Creek) road. In other words, don't destroy these roads and don't drop these roads from your maps. Otherwise, it looks like back room deals are being made under the cloak of mining activity. Again, this is not appropriate. Don't forget, these roads existed before the National Forest existed. They were used to deliver commerce and mail. The public actively used these roads as thoroughfares for 80 to 120 years. That pretty much defines a right to public access.

Finally, I cannot find information about the 4.5 miles of new motorized trail in the Horse Heaven area. Figure 4 was unenlightening. The Collaborative discussed a motorized trail along Meadow Creek Ridge. The overwhelming feeling was negative because of the Roadless Area designation. If the 4.5 miles of roads are the existing roads in Horse Heaven area proper, I'm good with that. If the 4.5 miles of roads are something new or related to road building on the Boise Forest, I cannot agree until I know more.