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Comments: [External Email]Comments on 2022 IDFG Sheep Collaring Project (Salmon and Red River Ranger Districts)

[External Email]

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Dear Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest,

Please accept these comments on the 2022 IDFG Sheep Collaring Project (Salmon Regulation Red River Ranger Districts):

-- I urge the Forest Service (FS) to reject Idaho Fish and Game's (IDFG) request to use helicopters to pursue, capture, and collar up to 20 bighorn sheep in the Gospel Hump and Frank Church-River of No Return Wildernesses, including the Salmon Wild and Scenic River corridor! (The full proposal calls for another 15 to be captured outside of Wilderness -- a separate issue.)

-- The use of helicopters in Wilderness is PROHIBITED by the Wilderness Act and the Forest Service's Wilderness implementing regulations, and this project is fundamentally antithetical to protecting Wilderness in its untrammled state.

-- The use of helicopters in the Wild and Scenic River corridor is prohibited by the Frank Church-River of No Return Management Plan.

-- Essential, this project has nothing to do with managing WILDERNESS and must be rejected.

Federal judges have admonished the FS and IDFG for their rushed implementation of unlawful helicopter projects in Wilderness in the past, with the courts warning the FS that it "must proceed very cautiously here because the law is not on their side if they intend to proceed with further helicopter projects in the [Wilderness]."

It's wrong for the agency to entertain authorizing another such project following decisive legal opinions on past helicopter use for similar wildlife collaring projects.

The Forest Service needs to uphold the law and reject IDFG's latest proposal for motorized intrusion and intentional trammeling of the Gospel Hump and Frank Church-River of No Return Wildernesses in Idaho.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Leon Van Steen

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