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Organization:

Title:

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 my comments on the 2022 IDFG Sheep Collaring Project (Salmon and Red River Ranger Districts).

Please 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.

These areas are designated Wilderness and Wild and Scenic River. Animals and people seek refuge from civilization peace and quiet there. Motorized use is not permitted in Wilderness except by exception. This use should not be an exception. I believe in science but there are alternatives to this project and opportunities that do not infringe on these animals, visitors, and the integrity of Wilderness.

Helicopter pursuit and capture would cause undue stress on the bighorn sheep and other animals. Many visitors have been on rescues, fires or in the military. Helicopters do not enhance their quite experience but bring back stressful memories. Not only that, but 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 untrammelled state. All told, 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. IDFG needs to conduct this project outside of Wilderness before proposing to go into Wilderness.

Thank you. Judith Fraser, Hamilton, Mt. USFS, Retired

Sincerely,

Judith Fraser

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