

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/5/2022 12:00:00 PM

First name: genny

Last name: hoyle

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I applaud the interest in creating a long-distance trail in the PNW, however, I have concerns specifically as they relate to the Selkirk Mountains.

The Selkirk Mountains have ESA-listed species and species-at-risk, and the range itself is comparatively small. The PNNST has a route and not a maintained trail through sensitive alpine areas that are susceptible to impacts from high volumes of people. A route indicates that people/hikers will find their own path through sensitive alpine environments, and also be camping in these sensitive areas. The small Selkirk alpine environment would be damaged by the excessive numbers of people using this trail. For example, the John Muir Trail through the Sierras sees thousands of people each season, and is starting to be negatively impacted. I have concerns that the Selkirk Range cannot handle the use that comes with the hordes of people.

The under-staffed and underfunded USFS Bonners Ferry Ranger District already has problem managing the current rules and regulations. Adding hundreds and thousands more people to this small sensitive area would be detrimental to the Proposed Wilderness designation that it has. The USFS currently has ONE law enforcement office for the entire Panhandle Region.

Due to the presence of grizzly bears, I believe the USFS has an obligation to provide bear boxes and other proper food storage containers to prevent bear-human interactions. Current popular camping areas in the Selkirk mountains (i.e. Pyramid and Ball lakes) have no bear boxes, and are heavily used. The human waste at these specific sites is an environmental concern as well.

I think the PNNST has a place in the area, but I would hope to see the trail run through already well-used areas as to leave the less impacted areas well away from the excessive human use that will come with this trail eventually.

I think that a permit system should be looked at for the more popular backcountry areas to prevent overuse and degradation. A permit system, and the appropriate and well-funded infrastructure associated with this type of trail, should certainly be in place for this trail system.