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Comments: In 2016, I hiked most of the Idaho section of the PNW National Scenic Trail, starting at Parker Ridge and ending at Upper Priest Lake. Some of my comments are targeted at that specific section, while others are general comments for the entire trail.

1. Limiting Use

As noted in the Scoping Document, some sections of the trail are through wilderness areas and other less-used public lands. Other sections lead hikers through agricultural and more urban areas. I would support limiting the number of thru-hikers based on maintaining wilderness characteristics rather than averaging the carrying capacity of the entire trail. On my six days across the Idaho Panhandle, there were days when we didn't see any other humans, and that was the best part of the experience.

2. Noxious Weeds

I am concerned about the use of horses, mules, and other pack animals for thru-hikes, especially when traveling from infested areas to weed-free areas. Suggesting weed-free hay and other public education efforts are often not very effective. Some thru-hikes, such as the Appalachian Trail, do not allow horses and pack animals.

3. Erosion

Horses, pack animals, and bicycles are much more likely to exacerbate erosion - especially when trails are wet - than hiking boots. Some portions of the PNW Trail still have snow and runoff late into the proposed hiking season. Maintenance would be easier and more cost-effective if hiking is the only allowed thru-hike method, especially at higher elevations.

4. Fire Rehabilitation

Any vehicles used during fire fighting activities should be washed as practicable before moving from an area infested with noxious weeds to weed-free areas. Rehabilitation efforts should include noxious weed control and the planting or reseeding of native species on all trail sections affected by fire. Monocultures should be avoided.

5. Potential Conflicts

On the section of the trail that I hiked, there are some places where the trail is narrow and steep. While bicycles would probably not attempt to negotiate them, there is a potential for mules and other pack animals. Backpackers meeting pack animals on that kind of trail would be a negative situation for all and could result in injury.

6. Trail Building

Right now, there is a section in Idaho and another in Montana where the trail is nonexistent and hikers are bushwhacking. There is a positive side to bushwhacking because it would naturally limit the number of thru-hikers (it took 8 hours of bushwhacking through downed alder and woody debris on the Idaho section). I would suggest an analysis comparing effects between no change to creating a designated trail.

7. Garbage and Waste Disposal

If there is a major increase in the number of thru-hikers, the possibility of an increased amount of trash and unsafe waste disposal will need proactive mitigation measures.

8. Safety

Depending on the route, the Idaho section has areas with undependable water sources. Thru-hikers should be warned when obtaining a permit. As a specific example, the route on Parker Ridge meant an eleven hour day in 90 degree heat and a dry camp. The route in Long Canyon Canyon has ample water. There is an option to

designate Long Creek Canyon as the only official route, but many thru-hikers prefer the Parker Ridge route.

I look forward to reviewing the preferred option in the Draft Management Plan.