

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/15/2022 3:27:28 AM

First name: Kenneth

Last name: Vanden Heuvel

Organization:

Title:

Comments: My comments are regarding the PNT route through the Yaak. The northern route goes through significant core grizzly bear recovery areas in the Yaak. The high meadows on this route provide important summer habitat for grizzlies. When usage increases on the PNT, the small population of grizzlies in the Yaak will be threatened due to potential encounters or displacement by the increased human presence. With this small population of bears listed under the Endangered Species Act and still far from recovery, the northern route is a mistake and is unacceptable.

There have been studies on the impacts of the northern route and potential alternative routes proposed to reduce conflicts. A southern route has previously been proposed that reduces the amount of grizzly bear recovery areas that are traversed. This route or one similar should be used. This route also runs along the towns of Troy and Libby which will provide economic benefit to these communities.

The impact to the grizzly population is the primary reason to reroute the trail, but there are several other benefits to a southern route including increased access to water for hikers, reduced burden on border patrol, improved cell coverage and access for search and rescue.

Please do what is right for the threatened grizzly population and re-route the trail out of their core habitat in the Yaak.