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Comments: I am writing in support of the proposed Southern Re-Route for the Pacific Northwest Trail, for the following reasons.

* The current, "Northern Route" impedes the Federally Designated Grizzly Bear Recovery Core in the Yaak region. Only four breeding female Grizzly Bears remain in the Yaak, and a high use trail should not exist in a recovery zone for Grizzlies. The Northern Route bisects 27 miles of prime habitat. The Southern Route only traverses a very small portion of Designated Grizzly Core, the Southern Route has an alternative reroute to eliminate any Grizzly Core access. The Fish Wildlife and Parks Bear Management Specialist said: No trail is the best option. Because of Federally Designated Grizzly Bear Recovery Core, a lot more issues arise with land management practices. These include:

- o Road density standards. Legally there can only be a certain amount of roads open in a National Forest that has Grizzly Core. A trail can be consider as a road if it meets the high use standard, which is 20 parties of one or more individuals per week (hiker or local use). When a trail or road becomes high use, agencies by law have to close other roads and trails to mitigate for Grizzly Core to ensure recovery zones are protected.

- o Access for all forest users, including timber management and motor vehicle access, due to road density standards. The agencies can not manage any part of the landscape that falls within half a mile of either side of the Congressionally Designated Trail, due to impacts of the scenic view shed requirements of a Designated National Scenic Trail.

- o Permitting. Because of the Scenic View Shed Requirements, Road Density Standards, and Designated Grizzly Bear Recovery Core, permitting must be implemented for local and non local users. This will lock out national recreation use along the trail corridor. This is not uncommon along other long distance trails such as the Pacific Crest Trail sections, like the John Muir Trail. But the issue with permitting is no one will have access to this trail unless a permit is granted, and that is going to lock everyone out of National Forest Access including long distance hikers.

- o The Northern Route is out of compliance as most of the designated trail is on open roads.

Other concerns related to the current (Northern) route:

* Border security has voiced concern regarding the current PNT location as runs along the Northern Border and hikers have been lost and crossed the international border. The Southern Route avoids all border security issues.

* Search and Rescue and Volunteer Ambulance Services in Troy and Libby have expressed their limited availability to find people on the Northern Route who are lost or injured, due to short volunteer staffing. There is more access along the Southern Route and it is closer to the local medical services.

* Resupply options are limited along the current route. The Southern Route has more resupply and bounce box options, as they will go through the towns of Troy and Libby. Over 25 local businesses support the Southern Re-route.