

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 4/16/2023 5:53:36 PM

First name: DIANA

Last name: BAIN

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Re: Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail Comprehensive Plan #52259

I am writing in objection to the Northern Route of the PNT. The proposed addition to the Pacific Northwest Trail would introduce a high traffic corridor of thousands of hikers through the heart of the grizzly's habitat. This northern route trail is highly problematic; 68 miles of the proposed PNT route currently pass through grizzly bear habitat in the Yaak, 44 of these miles are designated as grizzly bear core habitat.

Siting the trail through the Yaak would be dangerous to both bears and hikers, and would be detrimental to the grizzlies and their critical habitat.

The Yaak grizzly bear population is the most endangered grizzly population in North America and has met qualifications to be up-listed from threatened to endangered status under the ESA. Responsible management of their protection, as well as of the hikers that would be sent into their territory, is not currently being considered with priority. It is not suitable, necessary, or responsible to put a high traffic corridor through the core grizzly habitat of the Yaak Valley.

Population connectivity is a fundamental principle of conservation, and it is vital to the survival of the Cabinet/Yaak grizzly bear population. In addition to managing for connectivity, allowing bears to travel unmolested from core population to core population, first and foremost healthy and secure core habitat must be retained and protected from the management practices of other state and federal agencies and from encroaching human use. Routing the PNT through their core habitat will not protect the grizzlies.

Multiple proposals exist that would reroute the trail, allowing hikers to still experience the region along the PNT but not impact the core grizzly habitat. The benefits of the Southern Route of the PNT through the Cabinet region are numerous for many regional stakeholders, including communities, businesses, forest management, hikers, and grizzlies. A win-win solution exists in the Southern Route of the PNT.

I petition the US Forest Service to consider their responsibility to caring for the land and wildlife and serving people. I petition the US Forest Service to ensure that the Southern Route of the PNT is put in place instead of the Northern Route for the wellbeing of all involved.

Respectfully,