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Comments: Kootenai Tribe elders pass down the history of the beginning of time, which tells that the Kootenai people were created by Quilxka Nupika, the Supreme Being, and placed on earth to keep the Creator-Spirit's Covenant- to guard and keep the land forever. The Kootenai have never lost sight of their original purpose as guardians of the land.

Bands of the Kootenai or Ktunaxa Nation have inhabited Kootenai Territory, which includes portions of Idaho, Montana, Washington, British Columbia and Alberta, since time immemorial. The Kootenai Tribe of Idaho (hereinafter "Kootenai Tribe") is one of two bands in the United States.

Headquartered near Bonners Ferry, Idaho, the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho possesses federally reserved fishing, hunting and gathering rights within Kootenai Territory as reserved in the Treaty of Hellgate of 1855.

The Tribe and the United States Forest Service (USFS) enjoy a close working relationship and often collaborate on issues of common concern to protect the fish, wildlife, and plant resources within our Territory. Management of these resources within Kootenai Territory is essential to fulfilling our Covenant with the Creator to keep and guard the land forever.

The Kootenai Tribe received a letter from the US Forest Service Idaho Panhandle National Forest (IPNF) on February 13, 2023, which invited Tribe to comment on the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail (PNNST) Comprehensive Plan and associated Environmental Assessment (EA). The Tribe's prior comments are incorporated herein by reference, and included below are the Tribe's recent summarized comments:

#### Management Practices

The Tribe acknowledges the use of education and outreach to promote responsible practices to avoid human-wildlife encounters, and would continue to emphasize ways recreationalist and hikers can be prepared along the PNNST by carrying bear spray, and maintaining distance from wildlife.

#### Appendix F. Adaptive Management and Monitoring Visitor Use and Trail Conditions on the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

On page 163 (PNNST Comprehensive Plan), there is a brief mention of carrying capacity identification "Since there is no clear definition of party size associated with the 'average of 20 parties per week' criteria, several party sizes will be considered in the carrying capacity identification. The most restrictive being a party size of 1, an average group size of 2, and a larger group size of 12 (consistent with the maximum group size for wilderness areas and National Park Service units across the PNT). This will provide a range of potential visitor use levels that will be incorporated into the monitoring plan as trigger points and thresholds." The Tribe notes that the monitoring portion (Appendix F) of the PNNST Comprehensive Plan needs further discussion regarding how management action will be implemented if trigger points are reached (Table 17; Page 192), and appropriate interagency processes and coordination.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these additional issues/concerns and participate in the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail planning process. The Tribe looks forward to continuing to work together government-to-government on this issue of critical importance to the protection of Kootenai Territory and the Tribe's Treaty reserved and other rights.