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Attn: Fiscal year 2023 Lolo N.F. Land Management Plan Revision Team,

I am interested in the possibility that historic riding areas could

be opened up once again in the Great Burn for backcountry snowmobiling.

The topography of the Great Burn limits how much area snowmobiles can

cover. Steep cliffs and alpine fir regeneration blanket much of the

Great Burn. In retrospect, snowmobile access and riding areas are a

tiny fraction of the terrain in the Great Burn. Wildlife is least

impacted during winter months since ungulates drop to lower elevation

for winter survival.

I am not in favor of the Great Burn becoming wilderness. As of

present no roads will ever be built in the Great Burn in the future. If

the Great Burn became wilderness, Forest Service trail crews would have

to use crosscut saws for bucking and felling snags next to hiking trails

in the Great Burn. Crosscut saws are slow and it takes many hours of

training to use and sharpen properly. For many years and currently,

chainsaws are allowed to be used by Forest Service personnel for bucking

fallen snags and encroaching brush on trails in the Great Burn RWA.

Volunteer groups are given administrative approval by the Forest Service

and allowed to cut out trails in the Great Burn RWA with gas powered

chainsaws. The whole Lolo National Forest contains heavy brush,

therefore it makes sense to use chainsaws to cut brush out of trails.

Hopefully a lot of thought will go in to this revision with cost

effectiveness and safety for the forest. Example of safety: One sawyer operating a chainsaw has the ability to look up more often for overhead dangers while bucking or felling dead lodgepole snags next to a hiking trail in the Great Burn. Crosscut saws expose personnel longer to overhead limbs that may break off and lead to a tragic event. Forest Service has always used gas powered chainsaws in the Great Burn in areas where wildlife maneuvers throughout summer months. With less wildlife maneuvering in the high elevations during the winter it would seem that a snowmobile would have less impact in the Great Burn. Just a thought.

Tidbits for Wild and Scenic Rivers on Lolo National Forest: Keep existing roads in place and trailheads that are adjacent to creeks and rivers. Cost effective to leave a road as is.

It means a lot to the public to see physical things getting done on the Lolo Forest such as hiking trails cut out to meet Forest Service specs., replacing dilapidated signs on trails and roads, tree (regen) thinning, clean trailheads, use of helicopter for aerial ignition (brush field cleanup) in the Great Burn, logging crews harvesting timber in suitable locations on the Lolo, and seeing an end result of a cared for Lolo National Forest. It is a privilege to navigate the Lolo National Forest via foot, ski, or motorized. I think computer technology updates and social media is a bigger challenge monetarily. Hopefully the Lolo Forest revision will reduce the number of Management Areas (simplify) and direct more dollars to skilled seasonal workforce (boots on the ground).

Thanks, Kevin

Elmstrom

May 16th,

2023