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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Elk habitat

Quality elk habitat is tied to their level of security from human impacts, especially during hunting season. Motorized access drastically increases noise pollution and hunting pressure. There are millions of acres throughout Idaho with motorized access; damaging remote wildlands hurts hunting by reducing secure elk habitat. These protections also benefit other species like bull trout, lynx, fisher, wolverine, and grizzly bears.

Legal and ethical obligations

The Forest Service should follow their own regulations and adhere to federal law. Responding to repeated court decisions with this amendment is a slap in the face to accountability. In a time of unprecedented wildlife and biodiversity decline, the USFS should defend nature, not undermine it.

Grizzly bears

Threatened grizzly bears are in recovery in the west. These wildlands are excellent habitat and an important corridor for bears expanding their range beyond the Northern Continental Divide and Cabinet-Yaak ecosystems.

Bull Trout

A unique extremely threatened population of bull trout exists in Fish Lake. The US Fish and Wildlife Service has concluded that motorized use, bringing more people to the area, would harm this population and possibly lead to its extirpation.

Wildlands

Four wild areas would be affected: The Great Burn/Kelly Creek, Weitas-Bighorn, Fish and Hungry Creeks, and the Elizabeth Lakes area of the Mallard-Larkins. Wild areas of this size and habitat quality exist nowhere else in the lower 48. All of them should be open to hikers, backpackers, and horse riders without the impacts of motorized use. All these areas would be protected as Wilderness in the Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act.

Recreation

Fish Lake rests below the Stateline Trail, a widely used backpacking trail, and part of the Idaho Centennial Trail. FOC members and staff have documented illegal motorized use.

Sincerely,

Mark Mansfield