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Title:

Comments: The forest plan's Biological Assessment deems Grizzlies as "socially unacceptable" in all areas outside of Wilderness or roadless areas. Time and again, science has shown that Grizzlies are a necessary part of the complex ecosystem that exists on the Clearwater NF. Its current ecological integrity is paramount, as biodiversity faces serious problems today and in the years ahead. In light of these facts, I believe more Wilderness should be recommended.

The Forest Service recommended 263,000 acres as Wilderness, which constitutes just 17% of the 1.5 million acres of remaining roadless land on the forest. The 1993 settlement agreement provided 558,000 roadless acres to be managed as recommended Wilderness. It appears, unsurprisingly, that the Forest Service isn't living up to this agreement.

Excluded under the proposed plan are areas like the Upper North Fork of the Clearwater, Pot Mountain, Weitas Creek, Lashsa Slope, Sneakfoot Spruce, Rapid River and Gospel Hump: all should be included in the recommended Wilderness, which as you know, is the best protection afforded, next to National Park status, for an ecosystem and its wildlife.

The Meadow Creek Upper North Fork, for example, has an intact, healthy functioning ecosystem, yet the Forest Service didn't recommend this area for Wilderness, because the service felt they needed to "manage" the area to preclude "catastrophic" fires. It should be noted, large fires have always been apart of nature that occur on varying fire rotations, which I am sure you know. They usually exist when there exists extreme fire weather events: low humidity, high heat, drought and wind, such as was the case in the 1910 Big Burn, the recent Camp Fire and the Yellowstone Fire of 1988- all of which were put out by nature when conditions subsided. In Yellowstone, the snag forests that were left provided essential habitat for myriad of wildlife species but most certainly left a large amount of what the Forest Service would call fuels behind that remain to this day.

The Forest Service sees this as a problem, as it does insect infestations, which are again apart of the natural processes nature has been employing long before mankind showed up. This promotion of active forest management arrogantly assumes man knows what is best for the natural world, yet time and again, this has been shown to be untrue. If anything, it is an excuse used to appease industry by maintaining the status quo. Given the poly crises we face today, new paradigms are needed where ecological health is far more imperative rather than chasing after profits; the later has been instrumental in bringing us the myriad of problems being experienced today.

Science again, as noted the value of mature and old growth trees, from their storing of carbon, to providing microclimates and wildlife habitat, to keeping forest soils intact and streambeds cool and clear, which benefits man in ways most don't appreciate. For these reasons, I ask you recommend for Wilderness protection all of the 558,000 acres you agreed to in 1993.