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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Forest Plan Revision Comments

Dear Forest Planners,

The Great Burn is loved today, as it is, and it must be protected even further, as Wilderness. At the recent forest planning meeting in Missoula I was one of the only young people (29) at the meeting. Mostly there were 50+ year old men, a fairly homogenous group that does not represent the full spectrum of love for Wilderness and the Great Burn proposed Wilderness. And, of course, there weren't plants and animals who love their functioning ecosystem there to represent themselves. The loudest voices aren't the most important. It's the duty of our government agencies to protect public land, including the complex and increasingly fragile ecosystems (due to climate change and human use) that thrive on public lands. Economic and recreational values need not even be a part of decision making process. We need to value the Great Burn and adjoining wilderness areas for the sake of future generations, and for the sake of the plants and animals that live there and lack adequate representation. I support as robust of protections for the Great Burn and nearby areas as possible. We can already drive machines over most of our country.

Some of the men at the meeting cited that they've snowmobiled for a couple generations, which gives them a sense of entitlement to the area. Two, three, even five generations is not that long when you consider the length of time the Nez Perce spent on the land. The forest service desire to maintain "traditional" uses is very short sighted. The land is much older than modern peoples' use of it.

I've worked trails for the Forest Service in the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness for the last seven years. I know Wilderness has value, far beyond the enjoyment I get when I spend my summer there. Even if I was wheelchair bound, I would support as much wild land as possible. We can't have enough, and we have plenty of places we can drive vehicles. As for mountain bikes, I know stock users don't like them, period. The speed at which they travel and the erosion they can cause strongly effect wilderness character. Maybe people have been more courteous as late knowing their "rights" to bike and snowmobile on this land are up in the air, there were some thoughtful voices at the forest planning meeting, but if you open it up I believe the human mind is such that people will develop a stronger sense of entitlement, abusing the land for their own whims.

The government needs to step in and protect the most vulnerable, the plants and animals on public lands, as well as our own future selves. Our wild lands are irreplaceable.

Thank you forest planners! Good luck!

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