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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Regional Forester Leanne Marten,

I am writing to express deep concerns about the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest's recently revised Forest Management Plan, particularly concerning the extensive changes in the protection status of rivers deemed eligible for inclusion within the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest is unique as it has many exceptional rivers within its boundaries worthy of permanent protection under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The decision of the Forest Service to remove safeguards from 86% of its currently protected rivers is alarming. This decision would fail to protect tributaries to the Lochsa, and Selway, as well as strip protections that have been in place for the North and South Forks of the Clearwater Rivers for more than 30 years. These rivers embody the essence of the "best of the best," as envisioned by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

The decision to move forward with suitability and the subsequent release of protections is a choice. Please help change this direction and either maintain interim protections for all rivers found eligible or forego the suitability process entirely. Not only is the Forest's rationale for non-suitability often unsupported or false, but the decision is also inconsistent with all other Forests in the Region that have revised their Plans since 2012. Ignoring the input of the majority of commenters who expressed support for river protections, the decision is also counter to the public interest and the broader goals of the Administration.

As an advocate for the preservation of Idaho's rivers, I strongly urge the Forest Service leadership to reconsider and retain Wild and Scenic River eligibility protections within the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest Plan. The exceptional value of these rivers to the community, environment, and future generations cannot be overstated. Wild and Scenic River protections offer a balanced approach that ensures the quality of life for those who cherish the rivers of the Clearwater watershed while allowing for compatible projects.

I hope the Forest Service will take the necessary steps to address these concerns and make informed decisions prioritizing the long-term health and sustainability of Idaho's most prized waterways.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to a positive resolution that safeguards the integrity of our cherished rivers.

Sincerely,

Bethany Blitz