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First name: Kate

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: To Amanda Milburn:

My name is Kate Bernot and I live in Missoula, Montana. Access to natural landscapes is one of the primary reasons I live here. I access some area of the Lolo National Forest at least weekly, if not multiple times per week.

In addition to the recreation areas near town, I also deeply appreciate the opportunity to backpack, raft, hike, and snowshoe in remote wilderness areas. It is important to me that as much of the Lolo National Forest as possible be protected from the intrusive effects that motorized vehicles in particular have on vegetation, wildlife, aquatic species, birds, and natural resources.

Therefore, I'm glad that the proposed forest management plan for the Lolo National Forest maintains many areas of wilderness and recommended wilderness. It's clear that the Forest Service is taking a holistic view of the Lolo National Forest with an eye towards ecological connectivity and preserving the most important wilderness areas. This type of integrated view is important and appreciated.

I have three main priorities I would like to see reflected in the forest plan:

1. Preservation of the Blackfoot Watershed: The Blackfoot is the core of so many of the recreational activities I enjoy: rafting, hiking, snowshoeing, hiking. Some of my most treasured memories are of summertime floats and paddleboards along the Blackfoot. The health of the river itself, and its fish and wildlife, is of utmost importance to me. I appreciate that the FS has retained the recommended wilderness area along the Bob Marshall and Scapegoat Wilderness, with the Mission Mountains Wilderness preserved as a non motorized backcountry area.

I would like to see the provision of the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act incorporated into the Lolo Forest Plan as well. This would ensure a complete preservation of this critical watershed.

2. Rock Creek: Rock Creek is another important area to me. I've spent many nights camping along the river, staying at the Morgan-Case Homestead, and hiking the surrounding mountains while encountering elk and mule deer. Rock Creek itself as a healthy trout stream is also of paramount importance to me.

Under the current Forest Plan, there are pieces of the Rock Creek watershed that would not be recommended for wilderness. I would urge the FS to add these components to create uniform wilderness protections across the area. To that end, I would like to see the Stony Mountain Roadless Area be designated as recommended for wilderness to safeguard the integrity of the Rock Creek watershed and the surrounding wildlife corridor.

3. Lolo Peak and Creek Area: The area around Lolo Peak is a special place for my family and I; my husband and I were married in view of Lolo Peak and the surrounding mountains. My favorite time of year to visit this forest is when the larch are turning colors in the fall. To continue to protect this important tree population, I'd like to see the Carlton Ridge RNA expanded as proposed. I would also ask the FS to extend the wilderness boundary past the RNA boundary, as was included in the proposed 2006 action.

Thank you for your efforts and consideration.