

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 3/12/2024 5:27:48 PM

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Comments: March 12, 2024

Dear Amanda and Plan Revision Team,

I am thankful for your efforts to absorb a wide variety of input to create the best plan possible. Ensuring the Lolo National Forest will be able to accommodate both the growing demand for outdoor recreation and habitat for rare critters is a challenge I'm thankful you are willing to address. I applaud the proposed action to retain the 1986 Recommended Wilderness Areas in the Forest plan revision. I recommend you directly mirror the designations laid out in the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act. Those designations are the product of more than 20 years of collaborate efforts and are supported by 84% of Montana voters according to the 2023 survey from Colorado College.

Watching snowshoe hares change color from winter white to summer brown fascinates me. The best place to watch the annual color change is in the West Fork of the Clearwater. The abundant snowshoe hare population in the West Fork of the Clearwater creates the perfect environment for lynx. There are roughly only 200 lynxes in the lower 48 states today. Maybe half of the 200 live in Montana and maybe half of those live in the West Fork of the Clearwater and the Swans just across the valley. To help lynx survive please provide the same protection for the West Fork of the Clearwater as the other lands included in the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act.

The Swan Range includes well defined avalanche chutes not far from Clearwater Lake. Each year snow slides in those chutes kill some deer and elk. That makes the perfect spring buffet for wolverines and grizzlies as they feast on the deer and elk that were unable to escape snow slides or avalanches. Having those vivid chutes designated as Wilderness will help ensure wolverines, and grizzlies, still thrive in Montana.

When Sacajawea helped Lewis and Clark some 220 years ago explore landscapes that are now governed by the Lolo National Forest wolverines, grizzlies, and lynx were common. Having those same rare critters thriving in the Lolo National Forest today is a remarkable achievement.

I've been fortunate to see seven wild grizzlies and one lynx in the wild. I have seen wolverine tracks but have yet to see a wolverine in the wild. With your thoughtful planning my grandchildren will have a chance to see grizzlies, lynx, and maybe I'll finally see a wolverine.