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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Hey National Forest Folks,

First off, thanks for all the good work y'all do! I applaud the protection of 21 streams within the Lolo National Forest including Rattlesnake Creek and the NF Blackfoot river. And, I appreciate that public comments and public opinion are weighted in making decisions for our community.

As you draft the next forest plan for the Lolo national forest, I have some requests and comments that I would like to add to the discussion. I am advocating that the streams with wild and scenic designation remain protected, and their integral OVR's are acknowledged. It's essential these rivers are protected from degradation and habitat threats. I propose adding wild and scenic (WSR) designations to the Thompson River, Fish Creek, SF Fish creek, and the St. Regis River. These sections of water have immense angling value, boating potential, and need their connected ecosystems protected. I also ask that you add WestSlope cutthroat to the species of conservation concern, in light of the many challenges they are facing. And lastly, I request that you work diligently to protect our watersheds as a tool for facing climate change. Areas that specifically need protection include: areas of persistent snowpack, areas that offer shade, cold water areas, gullies, genetically healthy fish populations. I've lived in Montana since 2003, and most of that time has been in Missoula. I was raised by a teacher and a GIS analyst, two people who taught me young that wild places need our protection and are essential to the health of our community. I grew up boating on the Clark fork River & the Blackfoot river, mountain biking the Rattlesnake trails and nordic skiing in Pattee Canyon. I went on to obtain a degree in Civil Engineering from MSU and studied eco hydraulics- the interface of fish and river health. I have worked as a river guide since 2016, starting first in Missoula on the Clark fork, Blackfoot and Bitterroot Rivers then the Missouri, Lochsa, Salmon and Yellowstone Rivers. I now work as a guide on the Middle Fork Salmon and get to educate my guests about the challenges the Frank church faces, the threats to salmon species, and how we can support our wilderness by way of policy and forest plans. I'm working on a teaching degree in Missoula to teach science to 5-12 graders. This is all to say, I'm very connected to Missoula and the Lolo National Forest. I cannot imagine a Missoula in which Rattlesnake Creek wasn't protected and thriving. I spent so many hours as a kid playing in that creek, collecting and skipping rocks, swimming, looking at aquatic macro-invertebrates, and connecting to the rattlesnake corridor.

I am so excited to have a voice in this next Lolo National Forest plan. It will undoubtedly influence the Missoula and surrounding communities for the next several decades. I hope that the Forest Service formulates a plan to protect our rivers, watersheds, ecosystems, native animals and plants. A plan that honors the indigenous peoples here, a plan that supports the trail running, mountain biking and climbing communities. A plan that explores natural resource extraction in a way that doesn't harm the natural ecosystem.

My job as a river guide is absolutely dependent on the health of our rivers. And my job as a guide is one of many that comprise the tourism industry in Montana. This industry upholds the Montana economy. So, I am vested in the Lolo national forest as a community member, an educator, a guide, and a steward of wild places.

Thanks for your time!

Katie Veteto