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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Lolo Planning Team,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Lolo Forest Plan Proposed Action. Having the chance to message you means a lot as I have so much gratitude for the work you have committed to maintaining the beautiful rivers and creeks around the Lolo National Forest.

I am an avid whitewater kayaker, paddle boarder, swimmer, all around water lover and these rivers are at the center of how I love to spend my time. Without, I literally would not be able to play around in these free flowing creeks and rivers. I understand it takes a lot of effort and keeping them accessible for recreation. So thank you!

With such appreciation and gratitude, I whole heartedly support protecting the following 21 rivers and streams as Wild and Scenic eligible.

I am beginning a dance/movement therapy and psychotherapy practice of which within the next year or I'd like to include place based sessions with groups and individuals. Place based sessions along these rivers and creeks which are near and dear to my own heart. Research continues to support the power of connecting physically, mentally, and emotionally to the outdoors correlations with increased life satisfaction and reduction of mental health symptoms. Maintaining these river protections allows our communities to connect with these creeks and rivers. When people are physically connected to these water systems, flora, and fauna they begin to understand how the quality of care of the land and their well-being are interconnected.

The creeks and rivers that maintain outstanding recreation, fish, wildlife values, and offer people the opportunity to connect and include:

\*Rattlesnake Creek

\*Rock Creek

\*Lolo Creek, South Fork Lolo Creek

\*Clark Fork River (St. Regis to Quinns)

\*Blackfoot River, North Fork Blackfoot River

\*Clearwater River, Colt Creek

\*Morrell Creek

\*Monture Creek, Middle Fork Monture Creek

\*Lodgepole Creek

\*North Fork Fish Creek, West Fork Fish Creek, Straight Creek, Cache Creek

\*Deer Creek, Cromie Creek, Up Up Creek

\*West Fork Thompson River

In addition to the 21 rivers and streams listed above, Wild and Scenic eligible protections are also warranted for the Thompson River, Fish Creek, South Fork Fish Creek, and the St. Regis River. The Forest Service dismisses these streams as neither unique nor important within western Montana. I disagree. These rivers possess outstandingly remarkable values that are unique within the region of comparison and include:

\* Thompson River - whitewater boating, exemplary angling, and important habitat connectivity between the Clark Fork River and cold water climate refuge headwaters in the West Fork Thompson River

\* Fish Creek - whitewater boating, exemplary angling, and important habitat connectivity between the Clark Fork River and cold water climate refuge headwaters within the Great Burn

\* South Fork Fish Creek - exemplary angling, and important habitat connectivity between the Clark Fork River and cold water climate refuge headwaters in Cache Creek

\* St. Regis River - exemplary angling, critical spawning grounds, and cold water climate refuge habitat

Westslope cutthroat trout should be added to the Species of Conservation Concern list due to lack of distribution of high genetic integrity and the potential for increased distribution resulting from restoration. Finally, the Forest Service needs to better operationalize climate refuge within its Conservation Watershed Network by protecting riverside shade cover, cold water seeps and springs, areas of persistent snowpack, microclimates, genetically pure fish populations, and riverine connectivity.

Please consider these improvements within the Proposed Action to better protect western Montana rivers.