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Comments: This is directly copied from mtb Missoula, I love backcountry riding and wilderness experiences. And am for all these actions.

mtbmissoula

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john97139

Mar 12

1 min read

Speak up today for access on the Lolo NF!

Updated: Mar 14

Descending towards Heart Lake in the Hoodoo Roadless Area

MTB Missoula has been deeply engaged in the Lolo National Forest Plan Revision process since submitting our preliminary comment in late 2022. Taking place over four years, the planning process is designed to be comprehensive as the plan will guide management of the Lolo for the next 20 - 30 years.

We've continued to provide input on behalf of mountain bikers who love backcountry riding or hope to see new trails developed near Missoula. Now, The Forest Service has released what's effectively a draft management plan in their Proposed Action and we need everyone to speak up.

We need your voice now

The comment period closes on April 1st. We need to demonstrate that access to increasingly rare backcountry trail rides on public land are important to many mountain bikers at the local-level and beyond. We need to convey that conservation goals can be achieved while retaining bike access. And, we need to share how new trail connections and recreation sites are needed around Missoula.

COMMENT TODAY!

Rather than supply a form letter, we've detailed our top areas of concern here. Please feel free to copy-paste these points into your comment but definitely add in your quality stories and subject matter expertise.

TOP THREE AREAS OF CONCERN

If you're pressed for time, these three areas are the most critical to cover in your comment.

Trail or Area

Proposed Action

Response

Reasoning

Heart Lake Loop, Stateline Trail (Maps)

Trails around Heart Lake to become Recommended Wilderness per 1986 proposal.

We strongly oppose this action without a non-motorized travel corridor established on trails surrounding Heart Lake. We otherwise support the action to achieve large landscape conservation goals via the Great Burn Recommended Wilderness. We request that the Nez Perce-Clearwater and Lolo NF align their mgmt policies. This is one of the few historic high-alpine mountain bike rides on the Lolo NF. The recently released draft plan from the Nez Perce-Clearwater NF recommends the Stateline Trail be managed to allow summer bike travel. A segment of the Stateline Trail is included in the route around Heart Lake making it compelling for the Lolo NF to allow bikes on the Heart Lake trail network.

Carlton Ridge to Mill Creek on Lolo Peak (Maps)

Recommended Wilderness does extend northward towards HWY 12 but not as far as these trails.

We support the recommendations for the Lolo Creek Geographic Area.

The three-miles of trail to the Wilderness boundary on Carlton Ridge is excellent backcountry mountain biking close to Missoula's urban area. There is no need to further restrict bike access on Lolo Peak and in the Bitterroot Range.

Cube Iron Roadless Complex (Maps)

Manage as backcountry designation

We strongly support recommendation for a backcountry

designation in this area which will maintain primitive characteristics while allowing for bike access.

The trails surrounding Cube Iron Mountain are among the few backcountry rides on the Lolo NF with excellent views and lush old-growth forest. Backcountry management designation ensures opportunities for solitude, resource protection, and recreation experience.

HONORABLE MENTION

Other important areas worth addressing in your comment.

Trail or Area

Proposed Action

Response

Reasoning

Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act landscape (Maps)

Does not use the BCSA boundaries, uses the 1986 recommended Wilderness

We support the BCSA as was drafted via coalition and submitted by Senator Tester for congressional action.

This provides mountain bike access on Center Ridge and creates trail development potential into the Otatsy Lake Area.

MTBM has committed to supporting this legislation-not so much for potential mountain biking opportunities-but for the greater conservation outcomes of the Blackfoot Clearwater watershed ecosystem.

Rock Creek (Maps)

Recommended Wilderness surrounding Quigg Peak to the west of Rock Creek. Backcountry management recmd. around Stony Mtn to the east of Rock Creek.

We do not oppose additional Wilderness at Quigg Peak, though some less popular trails (Rach Creek) may be lost. We support the Backcountry management on Stony Mtn to retain access and to ensure a bike-travel connection between the Lolo, Bitterroot, and Beaverhead Deerlodge NFs.

Trail 313 north of Skalkaho Pass is excellent backcountry riding. Stony Lake Trail (Tr 8002, Beaverhead Deerlodge NF) and Big Spring Creek (Tr 1269, Lolo NF) provide a great backcountry loop with Tr 313. Greater Missoula: Rattlesnake, Deep Creek, Petty Mtn (Maps)

Create at least three opportunities to enhance trail connectivity to create loop rides.

Cooperate with Missoula Co. on restoration and recreation planning efforts in the Deep Creek area.

We appreciate and support the progressive actions for the Greater Missoula Geo-Area as they are aimed at improving access and connectivity both to and within the forest. We continue to remain hopeful that the user-created trail system accessed via Dry Gulch Road will transfer to public ownership and offer additional trail-based recreation.

Western MT has changed significantly since the 1986 forest plan adoption. The desired conditions and objectives speak to the population growth and increase in forest visitation. The Missoula Front Country project encompassing Deep Creek holds great potential to relieve some of the visitation pressure at existing trail networks and to serve the rapid population growth occurring west of Missoula.