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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Missoula, Montana has been my home since 1982. The mountains, wildlife and wildflowers drew me here from Ohio. The quiet solitude and easy accessibility of nature and trails have nourished my spirit every day, weekend and vacation time since then. I have hiked or backpacked in various areas from one end of the Lolo Forest to the other end. Early on I could walk out my door in Hayes Creek and hike all over Blue Mountain. Now days I can do the same here in Pattee Canyon. I am truly blessed. In these days of computers, social media, video games and more stress, having these quiet places are critical for one's mental health and happiness.

In light of these thoughts and feelings I would like to first commend you for retaining in the new proposed forest plan the areas that were recommended wilderness in the 1986 plan and those proposed in the 2006 plan. The Great Burn/Hoodoo Roadless Area has been a favorite since 1982. Please retain the wilderness boundaries to allow Mountain goats, wolverines and other wildlife a chance to survive and flourish. Winter motorized access will only threaten their existence. The Ward Eagle and Meadow Creek Upper N. Fork also merit more protection.

Four years ago, I hiked in the Cube Iron/Silcox Area and found it lovely. This area, too, should be recommended wilderness as connectivity from the Cabinets to the Bitterroots would help the bears and other wildlife thrive.

The Lolo Peak and creek area has also been a favorite and is important for connectivity. The Carlton Ridge research natural area expansion as in the new proposal and the expanded wilderness boundary as in the proposed 2006 action would be wise and supportive of larch population and wildlife.

Please continue with the Rattlesnake Wilderness and the Rattlesnake National Recreation Area designations but develop restrictions as to timber harvest and road construction in the NRA.

I would encourage all pieces of the Rock Creek watershed be protected for the fish populations and for the wildlife corridor.

But most of all, I support the idea of no motorized or mechanized use in the recommended wilderness. There are so many other thousands of acres for these methods of travel. In a recent MOLLI class from Kerry Foresman from UM he presented a graph of the recovery of wildlife over the last 140 years. The recovery in numbers with the institution of conservation methods and laws was simply impressive until the beginning of the 21st century. The numbers are now falling. There are probably many factors causing this decline including climate change, but if there is something within our power to change this trajectory, we must do it now. Creating safe places for wildlife to thrive is one of them.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the proposed forest plan.