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First name: Michael

Last name: Young

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Lolo National Forest planning process. I'm impressed by the scope, level of detail, and quality of the materials provided and am particularly pleased that the Proposed Action carries forward all of the recommended wilderness from the 1986 plan.

I live in Missoula and have hiked in all the Ranger Districts of the Lolo National Forest and also do some gravel biking, canoeing, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. For example, I recently hiked several miles up from Petty Creek toward Petty Mountain and was treated to close views of about 30 bighorn rams! While I enjoy the opportunities the forest provides for quiet recreation, my primary reason for advocating for increased recommended wilderness is to provide significant connected regions of high-quality habitat for a wide variety of plants and animals. Montana is special in having large amounts of undeveloped public land that are home to virtually all of the species that were here prior to European settlement - a rarity in the lower 48! Because motorized and mechanized means of travel allow their users to penetrate deeply into wild places in relatively short times, I do not wish to see significant expansion of the places where those modes of travel are allowed, and would specifically hope that those activities would not be allowed within any of the recommended wilderness lands. And while local input on the forest plan is certainly appropriate, I think it's important to recognize that national forest lands belong to all Americans - so local preferences shouldn't necessarily outweigh broader goals about preserving biodiversity or the character of the forest.

My primary goal in commenting is to advocate for the classification of some additional areas as recommended wilderness in order to minimize the potential loss of habitat connectivity and to ensure that a substantial portion of our state remains "wild". Among the additional areas that I think would be appropriate to include as recommended wilderness are:

(1) areas proposed as wilderness in the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act (CUB), which includes a parcel on the West Fork of the Clearwater and a parcel in the Grizzly Basin in the Swan Range (the Proposed Action does include most of the areas identified by the BCSA along the southern margins of the Bob Marshall and Scapegoat Wildernesses, which would add protection for several major tributaries of the upper Blackfoot River).

(2) the area to the north and east of the recommended wilderness along the South Fork of Lolo Creek (and the Lolo Peak area, LC), to extend north of the Carlton Ridge RNA and to match the boundaries of recommended wilderness that were part of the 2006 revision that was abandoned.

(3) the Cataract, Cube Iron-Silcox and Sundance Ridge roadless areas north of Thompson Falls (LCF). These areas would provide additional connectivity between the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness to the north and the Bitterroot Mountains to the south, of particular importance for the potential migration of grizzlies into the Bitterroots.

(4) the Ward Eagle and Meadow Creek-Upper North Fork roadless areas (MCF), which have unusually strong wilderness characteristics. I'm especially pleased that the Proposed Action supports the continuation of recommended wilderness status for the full Hoodoo Roadless Area, which is threatened by the decision of the Nez Perce-Clearwater NF to remove that status from areas to south in Idaho. I'm concerned that expanded snowmobile use in the area will be detrimental to the mountain goat herd that inhabits the region along the Stateline Trail and potentially to other wildlife.

(5) the Reservation Divide south of the Flathead Reservation (NPC), which was recommended for wilderness in the 2006 proposed action, includes a significant hiking trail, and would provide some connectivity between the

Mission Mountains and the Bitterroots.

(6) the Stony Mountain roadless area (RC), which would provide additional protection for the Rock Creek watershed's famous fishery and also enhance north-south connectivity along the Sapphires and to the Sapphire Wilderness Study Area.

I was also pleased to see that the Forest Service plans to do additional work around connectivity issues. I expect you're already considering a variety of possible actions, but I'd like to see recommended wilderness bordered by substantial areas of non-motorized backcountry, with the overall distribution specifically including corridors of substantial width (miles?) that are along natural pathways between existing wilderness. Given the high fraction of lands in this area that are part of the Lolo National Forest, it should be possible to make significant strides in this direction, but such corridors aren't evident to me in the maps of the proposed action. Ideally the corridors would also connect to places where passage across significant barriers (e.g. I-90) would be possible - either under existing bridges or through future structures designed to allow passage over or under the barrier.

Thanks again for the opportunity to comment and I look forward to following the progress of the plan as it's developed further.