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Comments: I applaud the LNF revised forest plan for mostly moving forward, not backward, when it comes to the Rock Creek drainage. As a resident of the drainage I depend on it for its scenic value, its recreational opportunities that feed my body and soul, and its ecological importance as an intact ecosystem that contributes to connectivity and climate resilience.

With the lower 36 miles of Rock Creek recommended as suitable for Wild and Scenic designation, I am hopeful that official Wild and Scenic designation will eventually come. This narrow canyon provides some of the most scenic and drivable miles in the area along with hiking, camping, and world class trout fishing. With this designation comes greater protections and awareness of its value beyond development. We can stand to learn from the proposed copper mine on the upper Smith River that development and extractive industries are lurking unless we are preemptive with our planning and safeguarding.

The increases to roadless designation in Rock Creek add protections to extensive uplands that provide the high snowy ridges and the cold, narrow tributaries that feed this blue ribbon trout stream while also safeguarding large stretches of habitat for animal migration and seclusion. Yet, these additions continue to allow for hunting and foraging these landscapes as has been done for millennia. Stoney Mountain, Quigg, Welcome Creek, and Silver King would add 32,477, 67,037, 1,062, and 12,774 acres respectively to the inventoried roadless areas. Though the Quigg roadless area is within the Sliderock recommended wilderness, I agree with Wild Montana that it is a missed opportunity that the Stoney Mountain roadless area was not recommended as wilderness. This is high white bark country that reaches up to the spine of the Sapphire/Bitterroot divide and would help tie together the watershed into a more connected ecosystem.

It is appreciated that the revised forest plan retains the 58,826 acre Sliderock recommended wilderness. I have hiked, camped, fished, and hunted in these mountains and drainages and could not be happier that the plan recognizes the remoteness, the wildness, and the ecological value the Sliderock country possesses. Continuing to preserve these wild places for humans and nature alike is a virtuous endeavor. Wild and Scenic designation, increased roadless designation, and recommended wilderness all play together to maintain the wild and scenic value humans have come to love about Rock Creek while also helping to preserve this large landscape that promotes aquatic and terrestrial connectivity and climate resilience now and into the future.