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Comments: I spent the 2023 summer hiking hundreds of miles along the Stateline and its adjacent trails between US 12 and I-90 as part of a project to survey and monitor invasive weeds populations for the Great Burn Conservation Alliance. In the time I was out there, I forged a lifelong connection with the Great Burn. The stands of old growth cedar, alpine lakes, rocky ridgelines, mountain goats and moose I saw that summer forged a lifelong connection with the land. At the same time, the Great Burn tells a story of America: land management, native dispossession, and railroad expansion, culminating in the Great Fire of 1910.

On the other hand, this summer I saw the impacts of human use in the Great Burn through the spread of invasive species, including St. Johns Wort, Canada Thistle, Houndstongue, Mullein, and Oxeye Daisy. These species spread along forest roads and up from trailheads, where they are capable of outcompeting native species for sunlight and nutrients, taking over entire hillsides. These weeds are not only unsightly. By pushing native plants out, they reduce the amount of quality forage for critical species such as elk, bear, moose, and mountain goat, which will lead to declines in their populations.

It is to prevent further spread of these harmful species through increased motorized and mechanized vehicle travel that I advocate for maintaining the existing Hoodoo Recommended Wilderness boundaries. I also support the Forest plan incorporating more wildlife habitat connectivity and corridor areas along the entire Stateline, not just the recommended wilderness, as the forest is interconnected and serves as a critical migration route for megafauna moving between Yellowstone and Canada.

Finally, I want to recognize that the Great Burn is home to the Nez Perce, Salish, Kootenai, Ktunaxa, and Coeur d'Alene tribes, and their interests should be well represented in the new Forest Plan.