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First name: Douglas

Last name: Brinkerhoff

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am writing this comment to suggest that the upper reaches of the OBrien Creek Drainage be designated "primitive non-motorized" as opposed to their current designation in the proposed action of "roaded natural", in particular the parts of the forest accessed from the (currently gated) end of OBrien Creek Road, as well as those lands falling to the east of Black Mountain (which are currently only accessible via trail).

I am a landowner, and my property directly abuts the Lolo National Forest on three sides in OBrien Creek. I am also an avid outdoor recreationist. I do not think it would be an overstatement to say that in the past five years, I have spent more time traveling through OBrien Creek's public lands than anyone else. Whether that is trail running in the spring and summer, hunting in the fall, or nordic skiing in the winter, on any given day there is a good chance that I am utilizing our public lands in this area.

In the course of spending time in this area, I have noticed two primary things. First, the portions of OBrien Creek that are easily accessed via the OBrien Creek loop trails are heavily used for non-motorized recreation. Missoula residents - particularly those on the west side of town - seeking a slightly wilder and more off-the-beaten-path recreational experience than Blue Mountain frequently hike, walk dogs, etc. in this region - I am well aware of the volume of such use because my house is immediately adjacent to the trailhead and on nice days I can hear groups of hikers and dogs from my backyard. This very important and highly utilized recreational resource is incompatible with motorized use. While the intent may be to maintain the current non-motorized pattern of management, it makes little sense to leave the door open to other uses when this area's recreational value is so high.

The second thing that I have noticed is in relation to the parts of the drainage that are not easily accessed by the OBrien Creek trail system. As an avid bird and big game hunter, I have traveled the creek bottom and the ridges above it to the north many times, and I can say that it is very important wildlife habitat. In particular these wilder portions of the drainage are one of the last places in the immediate vicinity of Missoula where mule deer are still the dominant species (which is to say that they have not been displaced by whitetails as is the case in most of the wildlands directly adjacent to Missoula). I fear that could change if motorized access were increased in this area. Many other hunters also utilize this area, precisely because it is one of the closest game-rich areas in the vicinity of Missoula that is not road-accessible. Again, while the practical management intent may not include opening the gate on upper OBrien Creek Road, it makes little sense to leave the door open to potential motorized access given the importance of the drainage to both local non-motorized recreation and to wildlife populations.

To reiterate, the exceptional recreational and wildlife characteristics of the public lands in the OBrien Creek drainage should be managed for non-motorized use, and this should be enshrined formally by designating the OBrien Creek corridor above the current gate and all lands on the north side of the creek as "Non-motorized primitive".