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First name: Sarah

Last name: Kilbourne

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Lolo Planning Team,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Lolo Forest Plan Proposed Action.

Lolo National Forest holds a special place in my heart, a love story of sorts that intertwines with the very fabric of my recreational passions. It was within the embrace of this forest that I found the activities that bring me the most joy: paddling, hiking, backpacking, and skiing. The diverse opportunities offered here were instrumental in my decision to make Missoula my home.

But beyond the activities themselves, it's the sense of community and belonging that I've found within Lolo National Forest that truly captured my heart. Paddling along the tranquil waters of Rattlesnake Creek and the mighty currents of the Clark Fork River, I discovered my tribe - a group of kindred spirits who share my love for adventure and the great outdoors.

One of my most cherished memories is of my first date with my partner of three years, nestled within the enchanting beauty of the Crystal Amphitheater. Surrounded by towering trees and the gentle murmurs of nature, our bond grew stronger as we explored this magical place together.

As I reflect on my experiences within Lolo National Forest, I am reminded of its importance not just as a playground for outdoor enthusiasts like myself, but also as a sanctuary for connection, growth, and love. I urge you to consider these personal stories and the countless others like mine as you shape the future of this cherished landscape.

I support protecting the following 21 rivers and streams as Wild and Scenic eligible. These streams have outstanding recreation, fish, and wildlife values and include:

- Rattlesnake Creek
- Rock Creek
- Lolo Creek, South Fork Lolo Creek
- Clark Fork River (St. Regis to Quinns)
- Blackfoot River, North Fork Blackfoot River
- Clearwater River, Colt Creek
- Morrell Creek
- Monture Creek, Middle Fork Monture Creek
- Lodgepole Creek
- North Fork Fish Creek, West Fork Fish Creek, Straight Creek, Cache Creek
- Deer Creek, Cromie Creek, Up Up Creek
- West Fork Thompson River

In addition to the 21 rivers and streams listed above, Wild and Scenic eligible protections are also warranted for the Thompson River, Fish Creek, South Fork Fish Creek, and the St. Regis River. The Forest Service dismisses these streams as neither unique nor important within western Montana. I disagree. These rivers possess outstandingly remarkable values that are unique within the region of comparison and include:

- Thompson River - whitewater boating, exemplary angling, and important habitat connectivity between the Clark Fork River and cold water climate refuge headwaters in the West Fork Thompson River

- Fish Creek - whitewater boating, exemplary angling, and important habitat connectivity between the Clark Fork River and cold water climate refuge headwaters within the Great Burn
- South Fork Fish Creek - exemplary angling, and important habitat connectivity between the Clark Fork River and cold water climate refuge headwaters in Cache Creek
- St. Regis River - exemplary angling, critical spawning grounds, and cold water climate refuge habitat

Westslope cutthroat trout should be added to the Species of Conservation Concern list due to lack of distribution of high genetic integrity and the potential for increased distribution resulting from restoration. Finally, the Forest Service needs to better operationalize climate refuge within its Conservation Watershed Network by protecting riverside shade cover, cold water seeps and springs, areas of persistent snowpack, microclimates, genetically pure fish populations, and riverine connectivity.

Please consider these improvements within the Proposed Action to better protect western Montana rivers.

In addition to the above, I appreciate that the proposed action has retained the 1986 Recommended Wilderness Areas as a starting point, and I would like to offer some suggestions for what the Forest Service should include in the plan alternatives.

The Great Burn is one of the wildest areas in the Lower 48 and provides vital habitat for wolverines, mountain goats, grizzly bears, and other sensitive species. It is critical that the Forest Service continues to designate the Hoodoo recommended Wilderness along the same boundaries that have been in place for nearly 40 years. I would also like to see the Ward Eagle and Meadow Creek-Upper North Fork roadless areas managed as recommended Wilderness to protect the area's incredible wild character.

I also support retaining the 1986 recommended Wilderness for the Lolo Creek and Quigg/Slide Rock Areas. The Forest Service should also consider recommending Wilderness for the Stony Mountain roadless area, which is also important for the Rock Creek watershed.

The Cube Iron-Silcox area is a wild roadless complex that provides excellent connectivity between the Cabinet, Bitterroot, and Mission Mountains. I would like this area to be managed as recommended Wilderness to protect species connectivity and ensure opportunities for quiet recreation.

Furthermore, I support the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act and would like to see all of the plan components of the collaboratively created agreement reflected in the Forest plan's analysis.

Please significantly reduce the excessive size of the motorized buffer along Morrell Mountain Lookout Road (FR 4365) to protect non-motorized access to this terrain near one of our very few backcountry yurts in this range.

I support the designation of a Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized setting for our favorite local spots at Lolo Pass, Hoodoo Pass, Saint Regis Basin, Wisherd Ridge, Marshall Mountain, and Morrel Mountain. These popular areas provide opportunities for accessible human-powered backcountry skiing/riding day trips on public lands.

Please restrict motorized access into the Crystal Amphitheater on Lolo Pass, which is heavily used by the backcountry ski and snowboard community. I oppose FS 16675 as a Semi-Primitive Motorized setting. Please consider it as a Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized setting to prevent snowmobile conflict and trespass into this beloved ski area.

Please restrict motorized access into Saint Regis Basin. I oppose FS 18591 as a Semi-Primitive Motorized setting. Please consider it as a Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized setting to lessen snowmobile conflict.

Thank you for listening to my story and for your dedication to preserving the beauty and wonder of Lolo National

Forest for generations to come. I appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed action and for all the work that has gone into the plan revision process so far.

Sincerely,
Sarah Kilbourne