

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 3/31/2024 3:24:39 PM

First name: Bonnie

Last name: Gestring

Organization:

Title:

Comments:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Lolo National Forest Land Management Plan Revision. My family and I spend considerable time in the Lolo, including activities such as hiking, backpacking, birdwatching, berry-picking, cross-country skiing, wildlife-viewing and fishing. We strongly support management activities that are centered around the protection of healthy watersheds, maintaining and supporting Wilderness, and the protection of wildlife, wildlife habitat and wildlife corridors.

We support the preservation of recommended Wilderness Areas, particularly the inclusion of the Hoodoo Roadless area. We urge the Forest Service to add an alternative or alternatives that recommend additional strategically located Roadless Areas for recommended Wilderness designation. With a growing population, it is more important than ever to manage these lands to enhance habitat connectivity.

We urge the Forest Service to incorporate the Ninemile Demographic Connectivity Area (DCA), which plays a crucial role in enhancing habitat connectivity for breeding female grizzly bears. Extending the DCA south of I-90 to ensure connectivity to the Hoodoo Roadless Area would be a significant improvement.

We ask the Forest Service to add connectivity as a specific issue for the Forest, and to include connectivity maps and management that identify core areas, corridors and linkage zones for large wide-ranging species like grizzly bears.

Roadless Areas contribute significantly to wildlife habitat by providing habitat security, connectivity, and rare, special and declining habitats such as old growth. As Roadless Areas are evaluated for future resource potential, the Forest Service should consider designating most or all of the existing Inventoried Roadless Areas for land use allocations that can enhance wildlife habitat and connectivity.

The proposed plan's identification of five management areas requires refinement. The current reduction in the number of management areas may be too extreme, and additional management areas are necessary to better distinguish between differing management strategies and clarify the intent of expected management. Plan Components should ensure species habitat recovery goals, accommodate wildlife security needs, address habitat connectivity at different scales, and manage vegetation to support species of conservation concern and special habitats.

Thank you,
Bonnie Gestring