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Organization:

Title:

Comments: My name is Maggie Schenk (formerly Pittman). I had the pleasure of working various tours of duty on the Lolo NF, but the highlight was serving as District Ranger from 2004-2008.

My comments on the Proposed Action for the LNF Forest Plan are focused on the Rattlesnake National Recreation Area.

I moved to Missoula in 1978 to study forestry at the University of Montana, lived in various rentals in the Rattlesnake area until 1982 and became very familiar with the remarkable and unique characteristics of the Rattlesnake which became my very special recreation area. Lively discussions were taking place in forestry school classrooms as the Welcome Creek Wilderness had just been Congressionally established and the Rattlesnake Wilderness and Recreation Area (RWRA) was being proposed for the same designation.

At the time, the Montana Power Company had been logging and roading their lands in the Rattlesnake drainage. This caused great alarm in the public and led to the formation and development of a citizen's initiative and Rattlesnake advocacy group - Friends of the Rattlesnake.

The group's efforts to prevent logging and road building in the Rattlesnake garnered widespread public and political support. This was exciting stuff. Arnold Bolle, the University of Montana's dean of forestry supported the idea and invited Montana's freshman congressman, Pat Williams, to consider drafting legislation to protect the area. Williams introduced the bill in Congress, ultimately creating and protecting the area.

With citizen's initiative and congressional and presidential support, lasting protection was put in place for the NRA and Wilderness under the Rattlesnake Act of 1980. That Act designated the present-day National Recreation Area and Wilderness.

In 2005, the Missoula Ranger District hosted a 25th anniversary celebration of the RWRA designation in 1980. Pat Williams provided the keynote address, offering the following remarks:

"Bolle's theme, interesting enough for a forester, was unusual," Williams said. "He wanted preservation, but what was really important to him was access for people in one of Montana's largest communities to a wild place. These days, I think it's safe to say Missoula has one of the best backyards in the nation," Williams said.

The NRA and Wilderness were designated specifically to stop road building and logging in the Rattlesnake drainage. The 1986 Lolo Forest Management Plan and the 1992 Limits of Acceptable Change Direction provide the guidance and provisions that keep the RNRA looking like it does today. Management Area 28 standards emphasize a light-handed management approach and a primitive recreation experience. They do not permit commercial log removal, as evidenced by the last forty-four years of management.

As I read the current proposed action, I do not see any need for change in the RNRA. Nor do I see any specific protections for the area. Specifically in Appendix A, Table A2.3, I see that the NRA would be open to new road construction, reconstruction of existing roads and construction of new temporary roads in the south zone and up the main corridor. I don't believe this would be in keeping with the promise that Congress made with the American public and the citizens of Montana when they put the RWRA into law.

At a time when there is rapidly increasing recreation use, human pressure and impacts of climate change on the RNRA, NRA management direction should be more stringent, not more

relaxed.

The NRA has the highest national level of recognition as a recreation resource. I urge you to keep all of the RNRA standards in the 1986 LNF Plan with the following provisions:

- clearly state that the RNRA is closed to commercial tree removal, new road construction, existing road reconstruction - managed in perpetuity
- maintain the uniqueness of the RNRA by establishing a separate Management Area just for the RNRA that keeps the standards from the 1986 Plan, giving top billing to recreation and ensuring that the preservation and enhancement of the recreation resource remains paramount
- include additional protections to the new MA that will protect the area from future planning efforts intended to undermine the focus on recreation
- prohibit commercial logging
- prohibit new road construction and existing road reconstruction

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the Proposed Action. I appreciate this large undertaking and wish you the best as you work through the plan revision efforts.

Sincerely,

Maggie Schenk