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Title:

Comments: [External Email]Unable to Comment: Lolo National Forest Land Management Plan Revision #62960

Hello,

I have attached my comment below because the online form was "unable to be submitted" despite me trying to submit my comment before midnight. Please let me know if there is a better way to submit this comment.

Dear Lolo Planning Team,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Lolo Forest Plan Proposed Action. I am thankful for the thoughtful management work already being done throughout the forest and want to shed light on what parts of the plan are important to myself and the rest of the river community.

I wanted to start my comment by sharing a memorable story from Rock Creek. In March of 2019 two friends and I were fishing on Rock Creek and looked back towards the cars to see a game warden post-holing through the deep snow to check our licenses. We felt bad making him walk so far, so we walked toward him and met him halfway. He was thankful for our efforts and compliance. After the warden left my friend slipped down the snowy bank and ended up filling her waders with ice-cold water. We cut the fishing day short and cooked a hot lunch in the back of the car instead. I could not tell you how many fish we caught that day or what flies were working, but I remember the kind game warden, the lunch we made to warm up, and the view looking down the sunny valley.

I attended the American Rivers talk on March 5th and have used some of their language below. As a whitewater boater, fly angler, and outdoor industry professional my entire life revolves around the health of our rivers and access to public lands here in Montana.

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:

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

- [bull] Thompson River [ndash] 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

- [bull] 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

- [bull] South Fork Fish Creek - exemplary angling, and important habitat connectivity between the Clark Fork River and cold water climate refuge headwaters in Cache Creek

- [bull] St. Regis River [ndash] 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.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on such an important management plan!