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First name: Jerome

Last name: Walker, M.D.

Organization:

Title:

Comments: [External Email]Fwd: Lolo National Forest Plan Revision, re Rattlesnake Wilderness and Rec. Area

Dear Ms. Milburn;

I am writing you to submit a comment about the proposed Lolo Forest Plan Revision, especially as it pertains to the Rattlesnake Wilderness and Recreation Area. I am a retired physician who has lived in Missoula for over a decade now, but have visited it for recreational and photographic purposes for two decades before that. Both I and my late wife Dr Melissa Walker have served on the board of Wilderness Watch, a national watchdog organization founded by a former Forest Service Supervisor, Bill Worf. The organization's purpose is to make certain that both the letter and the spirit of the law are followed by the managing agencies for our National Wilderness System as established by the Wilderness Act of 1964. I have personally both hiked and back-packed in the Rattlesnake Wilderness and have been fortunate enough to become acquainted with some of the people who were instrumental in creating this very special Wilderness.

It has come to my attention that there are some features proposed in the new plan that are wildly incompatible with the law spelled out in the 1964 Wilderness Act, which prohibits certain activities in wilderness areas, particularly any use of motorized vehicles or equipment. I have also known for some time that this area was formerly and still is a sacred area to the Salish people who inhabited the Missoula area for many, many years prior to the arrival of Europeans. It was used as a site for spirit quests and for that reason is held to be sacred by the peoples now living in the Flathead Reservation to the northwest of the Wilderness and elsewhere.

Any inappropriate activities proposed for this area would create a storm of public protest and bad press that would certainly cause great difficulties and no doubt also litigation for the Forest Service. The prudent thing for the Forest Service would be to simply leave this area alone, as the 1964 Wilderness Act requires and let it be ruled by nature, so that it can continue to be a sacred place for the Salish as well as a restorative place for the non-Salish public to visit with the reverence it deserves.

Sincerely,