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Comments: [External Email]Lolo NF Revision

Hello there. We support the positions of our conservation partners, the Clark Fork Coalition, on the Lolo revisions as follows: What we support[ndash]These initiatives in the proposed revision align with CFC's mission of protecting and restoring the Clark Fork watershed.[bull] Many of the desired conditions outlined in the revision, particularly those pertaining to aquatic connectivity, riparian management, and the development of Conservation Watershed Networks. [bull] Free-flowing interconnected waterways[bull] The importance of partnerships in stream restoration[bull] Restoration of beaver habitat[bull] Addressing legacy road systems on acquired lands (where much of CFC[rsquo]s work occurs)[bull] The designation of Rattlesnake and South Fork Lolo Creeks as an eligible Wild, Scenic, and Recreational River, which would safeguard them from many kinds of harm for years to come. Our concerns[ndash]Some objectives within the revision should be more robust to effectively achieve these desired conditions within a reasonable timeframe. Our concerns primarily revolve around the scale and pace of restoration efforts, which would have a cumulatively negative effect over the coming years. [bull] Substandard restoration goals: Often the restoration work that the Clark Fork Coalition has conducted in the last 5 years in the Upper Lolo Watershed has surpassed the Forest Service[rsquo]s objectives for the entirety of Lolo National Forest. For example[ndash]in the last 5 years, we have partnered with the Lolo to remove 46 fish passage barriers and upgrade 7 fish passage barrier culverts in the Upper Lolo Watershed, while the Forest Plan revision proposes only removing or upgrading at least 20 existing NFS road-stream crossing structures every five years. [bull] Vague and/or insufficient goals and objectives related to maintaining adequate stream flows through water storage. A strategy we impel Lolo National Forest to include in this plan is the utilization of a variety of storage tools (both natural and man-made) that increase our ability to capture and preserve crucial water supplies for use during the hottest, driest months. These storage tools could include natural storage solutions such as beaver or wetlands, or man-made storage infrastructure, such as strategically located alpine reservoirs (headwater storage).[bull] Little focus on protecting vulnerable native species [ndash] including genetically pure cutthroat trout, which increasingly face hybridization with non-native species; and bull trout, classified as "Threatened" under the Endangered Species Act.[bull] The proposed allowance of motorized recreation in the Rattlesnake, LaValle, and Butler Creek watersheds. The Rattlesnake is home to stable populations of bull trout, while LaValle and Butler Creek have genetically pure cutthroat trout. Existing roads already deliver sediment to these streams, but allowing much higher-impact motorized recreation would drastically worsen water quality and degrade these native fish strongholds.