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Comments: Vision of "Wilderness"

What do we mean by "wilderness?" Understanding this can help decide what should, and should not be, included in the Plan amendment.

*If, by preserving the wilderness, we wish to preserve the wilderness experience as it is today, we might be too idealistic, unrealistic, and set impossible goals (given that we cannot control climate change, changes in rainfall, temperature, wind, etc.).

*Values-can we achieve consensus on things like: wonder, solitude, naturalness, night sky...Ask people who have visited the BWCAW, indigenous people, outfitters, etc.?

*Distill what we mean by "wilderness" to the primary "essences"-clean water (clean enough to drink/swim/fish), wildlife thriving, air quality, dark night sky, minimal human impact despite people coming to experience the wilderness. The experience of living disconnected from everyday life, depending only on one's own abilities and carrying all you need-both into and out of the wilderness, leaving no trace.

*Wilderness character-continue the approach that humans are temporary visitors and must leave no damage or alteration to the landscape

*Maintain current [human?] activities as much as possible, while adapting to changes caused by natural forces such as climate change, drought, heavy rains, wildfires, high winds. Acknowledge that a "hands off" approach allows human-fostered damage to harm the wilderness (greater fire risk, invasive species increase, etc.)

Should we consider "wilderness" solely through a human lens? Or, include lens of wildlife living in the BWCA, as much as we can discern it? Are indigenous perspectives instructive in defining "wilderness?"

Make Wilderness as resilient as possible to both naturally-caused and human-caused effects

*Identify dynamics that make the wilderness more resilient. What factors can humans influence and which ones are beyond our control?

*Learn from others-indigenous peoples, successful approaches and lessons learned from other places. For example, controlled burns to improve forest resiliency

*Foster planting/seeding of trees and shrubs that are natural to the ecosystem, help diversify and increase forest resilience

*Monitor/prevent invasive species. Gather data, provide education for people to help when they are in the wilderness, and take precautions to prevent spread of invasive species

*Prevent toxic and damaging substances from polluting/tainting the water

*Do not allow introduction of new mechanical means of transport or other equipment unless it is better at preventing and minimizing physical damage to the wilderness.

Minimize human impact while at the same time not limiting or restricting:

*Improve behavior of people visiting the BWCAW. Education/training/anticipate needs depending on expertise of visitors (anticipate how people who are not as experienced can minimize their impact while maximizing their participation). Use best practices to inform/instruct/train on campsite preservation. Require demonstration of competence?

*Potentially restrict size of group unless leader(s) is proven to be experienced and responsible

*Monitoring campsite conditions with data linked to specific users-and follow up with counseling, assisting (ideally before damage), and eventually consequences

*Prevent sulfide mining in all watersheds in the BWCAW, prevent other mining, logging, extractive activities, and other activities that cause damage or deterioration

*Do not alter the physical space just to make it easier (extreme example to illustrate: do not grade the trails or pave the portage entrance)

*Improve ways to instill Leave No Trace (based on data, research, experience)

Resources needed to carry out the plan

*Information-sharing both from the forest service to the public and between members of the public so expertise,

lessons learned, and innovative ideas can be shared.

*Data gathering, measurement over time, transparent/publicly available data on trends (and absence of trends). Evaluate periodically, and publish-every 3 years/ 5 years? Make sure adequate resources to do this effectively.

*At the beginning of implementation, document current conditions-create baseline of data against which to measure changes in the future.

*Tell people what will be measured-for example, for the campsite measurement of exposed mineral soil-if people know what is measured, they can try to help that condition from becoming worse.

*Staffing, funding, implementation realities-try to use ways of implementation, measurement, etc. that are practical and not burdensome or costly, yet are effective and as efficient as can be. Caution against depending solely on large appropriations repeatedly over the span of the Wilderness Plan.