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Organization: LaTourell&#39;s Resort & Outfitters

Title: owner

Comments: BWCAW Forest Plan Amendment

As our business has previously participated in the last major refinement of the BWCA plan of management in the 1990's, we would look forward to doing so again in this revision. We know there were some successes and some failures in how policy was implemented based on the process in the last revision, and we would look forward to strive towards more successes this time around. Although this first part of the process seems to be a bit less specific at this point, we would like to urge you to consider the following perspective as you look at the main groups of topics you listed.

Some of the problems that are listed in terms of changing trends and adverse impacts on our wilderness area are something we worry could be very subjective. Many of the problem issues that are listed, when viewed on a longer scale of time as our organization has been able to, seem to be non-issues to our customers. To give an example, without much data many of the areas of the BWCA were recently given a quota cut, rather than looking at other creative solutions that could have been used to solve the problems that were perceived. Some of these solutions could have been implemented and at the same time as allowed for continued use of the area by a wide variety of area visitors. We do have a worry of overreactive quota cuts and the elimination of campsites as being the only tool under consideration, when there are other answers. We and other outfitters urge looking to a wider variety of solutions, rather than just falling back on cuts.

As we have previously commented about, the continued use of the towboats is an EXTREMELY important topic to a huge percentage of our customers. They are very concerned that their visits to the BWCA would be impacted drastically if this important distribution tool is eliminated. Many have simply said it would end their trips to the BWCA. We would also urge you to be aware that the statutory cap number that is currently in use for all motor use is incorrect. Many have attempted to dishonestly claim we are exceeding the use allowed by law, but this is a lie. Until the formerly exempt use is computed into that number, the law is not being followed which stated the ACTUAL use was to be the standard to adhere to. The USFS was directed by the most recent court ruling to come up with an acceptable way to compute these missing numbers, but it has yet to do so. Again please refer to my recent towboat comments for more detailed information on this topic.

While we are generally supportive of using all of the tools to obtain a healthy forest including the use of fire to manage this, we do have some concerns in how the plans are implemented. The elimination of our customers' trips is a huge concern for us and our customers.

Finally, the listing of all of the "additional" management topics includes some of the items very important to us and all outfitters. Commercial outfitter use, permit systems, and quota levels are all topics that businesses such as ours depend on. We look forward to working to maintain the most healthy atmosphere for businesses such as ours and our customers. We also want to remind the USFS of the stipulations presented to businesses on the edge of the BWCA when buyout options were given to us in the late 1970's. Infringing any more into the abilities we were explained would remain with us in 1978 isn't an option

Thank you for taking our comments and we look forward to helping you as you formulate this new Forest Plan.

Bob La Tourell