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Comments: First, I am sorry for not dedicating more time to this project in the last month. I wish I could comment on more of the details.

Second, I was a member of the Big Creek - Yellow Pine Road Collaborative. My group of in-holders and recreation users presented a simple vision for the roads: maintain the status-quo for recreational use. However, the Forest Service status-quo was different from the public status-quo. Importantly, the Forest Service had closed roads on paper, but they had not physically labeled the roads as closed for some years. Hence, the public used these "closed" roads, as they had for the prior 100 years. Most egregious, the Forest Service did not make a proper effort to inform the public of pending closures. As you might suspect, this caused much consternation. I am still angry that the Forest Service turned a deaf ear toward our vocal concerns in the Big Creek - Yellow Pine Road Collaborative. I even felt that the Forest Service obfuscated the process. Now, more that eight years after the start of this fiasco, the Forest Service is putting a happy face on their proposals. I am not happy with any of the Alternatives. The Forest Service purports to have done its duty, but it fails to adequately address the fundamental disagreement between the Forest Service Administration and the recreating public. This disagreement centers around, but is not limited to, the Red Metal Mine Road and the Sugar Creek Road (Cinnabar Mine Road). The public sees these roads as important public right of ways. The Forest Service see them as closed or restricted.

At this point, I'm going to give a little background on recreation near Yellow Pine. For over one hundred years, Yellow Pine has been a hub for recreation. In every direction around Yellow Pine, there are back-country recreational opportunities. Yellow Pine is home base for nearly everyone using the country. In fact, Yellow Pine depends on recreational opportunities and these opportunities depend on Yellow Pine. Access is paramount and access depends on routes and transportation. For young people with time on their hands, there are more trails than they can shake a stick at. However, for people of average age, health and free-time, there are fewer recreational opportunities. Mainly, there are rivers to fish and sites to visit. The best day trip sites to see are Profile Ridge, Big Creek Basin, Monumental Summit, Thunder Mountain Mining District and the ghost town of Cinnabar. There are many other sites, but these five places probably account for half the day trips.

The first important detail ignored by the Forest Service concerns Profile Ridge. Profile Ridge is a large area but the day trip is only to the Red Metal Mine and nearby Crater Lake. Completely blocking access to the Red Metal Mine Road increases the hike by one mile, which is too much for children and seniors, since the elevation is 7300 ft to 8100 ft. A very reasonable compromise would be to allow travel on the first half mile of the road, until you get to the turn around area. This first section of road is nowhere near water and is the most beautiful half mile of heavenly wild flowers you will ever see.

The second important detail ignored by the Forest Service concerns the public's unwavering interest in Cinnabar. Cinnabar Creek road was blocked after Cinnabar Mine was cleaned-up in the late 1990s. However, the public completely disregarded the barriers. ATVs allowed the public to turn the obstructing ditches and mounds into playthings. On a weekend in the mid-2000s, I was hiking in the Sugar Creek valley and counted at least a dozen ATVs every hour using the Cinnabar road. People want to visit Cinnabar and the Sugar Creek Road is the best way to travel, except for the lack of a bridge across Sugar Creek. I looked hard at the Sugar Creek road and it appeared to be the most stable road in the country. The few sources of erosion can be easily fixed. Finally, I have seen the poor Boise National Forest put new bridges across a bunch of creeks. I have not been shown any fundamental reason why the Payette Forest cannot put a bridge across Sugar Creek.

The third important detail ignored by the Forest Service concerns the repercussions from mining at Stibnite. The

mining company made a shallow promise to keep the Stibnite road open for public access into the wilderness. However, issues like mining logistics, fine sediments and arsenic laden dust quickly nullified the promise. There was a faint effort to redirect the public access to Meadow Creek Ridge and Mule Ridge. However, the alternative routes were long and dangerous. These routes were not day trip routes for the general public. These routes required special vehicles and more travel time. Hence, Monumental Summit, Thunder Mountain Mining District and Cinnabar would likely not be available for day trips if the Stibnite road is cut off.

Finally, let's return to the hub of recreation: Yellow Pine. Of the five major day trip destinations, we could be down to one. One day trip to Big Creek does not support a hub. It does not support Yellow Pine's recreation needs. Also, missing wilderness access through Stibnite would cripple Yellow Pine. The Forest Service made a promise to keep the Thunder Mountain area open. No access to Thunder Mountain lasting months or years would break that promise.

You have heard me complain. I will attempt to offer a solution. One way I see to keep Yellow Pine as the hub of recreation is to compromise on the Red Metal Mine road and to open Sugar Creek road up to Cinnabar for all vehicles. From there, people with proper recreation vehicles could make it to Monumental Summit and to Thunder Mountain. This access would not be what we currently enjoy, but it might be the best with Stibnite mine in the way.

I would like to pick one of the Alternative plans, but I am concerned that my choice would be used to justify the Forest Service's viewpoint. I can say without reservation that Alternative C was not my choice. At best, it was the option the Collaborative was guided to select by the Forest Service's convoluted guidelines. Alternative D offers use of the Sugar Creek road, which I fought for, but I would sooner think this will be a slight of hand and not a true return of access to the public.

I'm am disappointed in this process. I am reminded of a similar struggle over access on the South Fork of the Salmon River in the 1990s. It actually took an act of Congress to construct an oil road along the South Fork, which gave year around access to Yellow Pine. The Forest Service seemed to benefit greatly with better access to Krassel Ranger Station. As near as I can tell, the Forest Service was not tore up by this turn of events. However, prior to the oil road, the Forest Service did there best to thwart the public will with their rules and regulations. Has anything changed?