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Comments: To Whom It May Concern:

My comments are in response to the final Blue Mountains Forest Revision Plan dated September 2024.

I oppose the Forest Service recommending any Inventoried Roadless Areas or any non-wilderness designated lands within the Blue Mountains National Forest (Umatilla, Wallowa-Whitman, or Malheur National Forests) for wilderness. There is currently nearly 1 million acres designated as wilderness. I do not agree that more wilderness is needed to protect and maintain the ecological or social characteristics of the Blue Mountains National Forest. The mission of the Forest Service is to sustain health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. Some of this assessment was based on opinions and not facts.

In the "Backcountry Recreation" section, it refers to this area as the least developed providing the "greatest opportunity for solitude, risk, and challenge in environments of rugged, undeveloped landscapes. Visitors may encounter rustic or primitive facilities . . . activities in this area include hunting and fishing, mountain biking, off-highway vehicle riding, recreational boating . . ." Why is the next sentence included in this section? "There were 42,000 designated wilderness area site visits in 2019 to the Blue Mountains National Forest." Overall visitor satisfaction was good or very good. Was there a mistake made in this section? Are the site visit tallies in fact referring to non-wilderness backcountry recreation rather than designated wilderness sites? The topic in this section is Backcountry not Wilderness. Backcountry recreation occurs in non-wilderness areas as well. Mountain biking, off-highway vehicle riding and users, mountain bikers, snowmobiles etc., do not occur in wilderness-designated areas. I 100% agree, backcountry does provide solitude, risk, and challenges. The areas are rugged. I also 100% enjoy recreating in the backcountry using off-highway vehicles, motor bikes, and snowmobiles in these non-wilderness designated areas. Not only do I recreate in these areas so do my children and grandchildren. To recommend these areas for wilderness would remove the opportunity for future generations to enjoy these backcountry areas in the same way as the present generation. With regard to a "degree of solitude, can be less than expected in popular areas." This is the world we live in. People like to recreate and there are a lot of people in this world. At times, some locations may have more users than others. Does that mean some people of certain user groups should be shut out? Does that mean some user groups are seen as more important and, therefore, desire special treatment by closing off areas to the less thans? In the conclusion of this section, it states that outdoor recreation can be at risk of causing overcrowding and can diminish the visitor experience and disturb natural resources. The SCORP also states a few societal changes facing outdoor recreation providers (which seems to contradict the previous stats outdoor recreation rising in popularity), one being "Lack of youth engagement." Perhaps the Forest Service should focus on youth and develop programs to encourage outdoor recreation. Afterall, this would fit nicely with the Forest Service mission of sustain for future generations.

Transportation Infrastructure section. It states, "With the focus shifting to maintaining roads for passenger car use," there has been deferred maintenance of current road system. First of all, why is there a focus on passenger cars using the forest? The forest is rugged. It requires certain equipment to be able to get to those areas. This isn't Disney World with fake forests and nicely paved roads. Regarding the conclusion of this section, what does this even mean? It states that the FS doesn't have enough resources to maintain what they have. Public use is increasing. Isn't this a good thing? Everything in the assessment so far is about promoting use of the FS and now in the conclusion, it sounds like they will discontinue maintaining public use areas and services. Does this set up these areas to eventually be inventoried roadless areas as well? This sounds like a major contradiction.

I found this statement in several locations throughout this assessment. Under the "Inventoried Roadless Areas"

section, it states "The 2001 Roadless Rule designated 72 Inventoried Roadless Areas, totaling approximately 977,020 acres . . . These areas cannot be modified under a forest plan revision effort." However, if you go to the Designated Areas Assessment file, buried deep down in page 25 of 53 pages, it states "When a new wilderness recommendation inventory is conducted, all lands, including IRAs will be identified and evaluated for their potential inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System."

I do not agree with some of the survey data used to substantiate some of these conclusions. For one, I've never been asked to take a survey. Where were these surveys taken and by whom? There should be more than one data point to arrive at these conclusions. In my opinion, it appears there are opinions spread throughout this assessment.

In conclusion, "Wilderness" is not the only way to provide social, cultural, economic, scientific, and ecological benefits for present and future generations! There is already nearly 1 million acres of designated wilderness within these three forests. Inventoried Roadless Areas (about 977,020 acres) should not be identified, evaluated or included in any new wilderness recommended for inventory.

We do not need more wilderness! I feel this assessment was based on a lot of opinions and surveys that were not well vetted.