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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear US Forest Service,

I am writing to provide input on the revision of the 1990 Land Management Plan for the Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests, collectively known as the Blue Mountains National Forests. As a supporter of general aviation and backcountry recreation, I urge the inclusion of aviation and airstrips in the updated plan to ensure their continued access and maintenance for recreational, emergency, and economic purposes.

Historic Use

Aviation has been a significant activity in the Blue Mountains National Forests since the 1930s, with both commercial and private pilots utilizing airstrips such as Reds Horse Ranch (68D). I respectfully request that "aviation" be explicitly included in the list of approved activities to reflect this longstanding use.

Management and Maintenance

Aviation organizations have successfully implemented Airstrip Integrated Operations and Maintenance Plans on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. I encourage the adoption of similar plans across all Blue Mountains Forests. These partnerships with aviation groups are cost-effective, reducing the financial burden on the USFS while ensuring well-maintained airstrips.

Transportation Infrastructure

Airstrips are an integral part of the USFS's nationwide transportation system, akin to roads and trails. They support critical activities, including federal and state land management, wildfire operations, recreational and hunting access, emergency evacuations, and access to private in-holdings and commercial ventures that bolster local economies. Airstrips should be recognized as essential infrastructure in the revised plan.

Objectives

I recommend adding "Maintain Airstrips" to the list of management objectives to prioritize their upkeep and accessibility for future generations.

Dispersed Usage

Airstrips facilitate dispersed backcountry recreation, providing unique access to remote areas of the Blue Mountains National Forests and enhancing opportunities for outdoor enthusiasts.

Aesthetics

Airstrips blend naturally into the landscape, resembling open meadows on level terrain. They also provide valuable habitat for wildlife, contributing to the ecological diversity of the region.

Effect on Wildlife

Peer-reviewed scientific studies indicate that aircraft noise has no significant detrimental impact on wildlife, supporting the compatibility of airstrips with the Forests' environmental goals.

I strongly encourage the US Forest Service to incorporate these points into the revised Land Management Plan to ensure safe and continued access to airstrips for all users. Thank you for considering these comments and for the opportunity to contribute to the future of the Blue Mountains National Forests.

Sincerely,

Travis Kemp, Back Country Pilot