

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 9/28/2025 6:52:49 PM

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Comments: I would like to advocate for the continued priority to support small general aviation airstrips as a component of the Forest Service Strategic planning. It serves as a recreational service, but also can promote responsible engagement with forest lands. The pilot community can directly utilize these services, but they also can bring the public to them without increasing the footprint of roads or other infrastructure within the public lands. As a pilot, we also serve as one of the safety nets available to respond and transport people out of remote areas if issues come up.

I would advocate that small grass airstrips are specifically maintained as they limit the utilization of the airstrips from large aircraft which can introduce large noise concerns, and move a lot of people or cargo - yet these smaller strips are easily utilized by helicopters, small GA aircraft, and smaller commercial aircraft commonly used by scientists, emergency services such as Kodiak 100, or Cessna Caravan. These suggestions can balance safety, yet also clearly establish that these are not intended for industrial or heavy commercial use that isn't in line with the mission or spirit of public lands.

These land allocations are ultimately still natural and create space for local wildlife to exist and graze. The support infrastructure for such a location can be minimal such as simple direct access roads, or in the most built up examples minor shelter buildings, simple weather reporting stations, or emergency phone/contact systems with minimal land impact.

I would encourage we introduce language that specifically calls out aviation, and is specific about the kind of aviation these air strips are meant for, and designed for, and the purpose of these investments and uses. I do think aviation has earned a place here, and we just need to have a healthy debate and figure out the specifics of how aviation would be included.

Thank you sincerely for your time and consideration,

-Alex Witherspoon - Pilot & US Citizen